

HeinrichsWeikamp converter for Nikon iTTL

by Peter Rowlands

When I cut my teeth in underwater photography a flashgun was triggered basically by touching two wires together and that for me was technology I could both understand and accept. Even when the Nikonos V arrived with its 5 pin TTL flash system I could still understand how it worked because it was basically 5 wires making the contact between camera and flashgun.

Everything was going swimmingly in the (good?) old film days, especially if you used a housed Nikon camera. Their TTL system never changed from camera to camera so if you upgraded your camera you could still use your existing flash. TTL flash was the norm and became so established that many newcomers to underwater photography had never used anything else and so had little need to understand the flash exposure basics of aperture and distance.

Then the digital age arrived and, to be perfectly honest, I thought the camera manufacturers, especially Nikon, started showing off. With each new camera model came a new TTL system. Gone was good old understandable TTL. Now there was DTTL which begat iTTL and the maximum shutter speed for flash also varied in both directions.

The result of this posturing meant that existing underwater flashguns could only be used in manual exposure and we all had to remember how to vary the aperture dependent on the flash to subject distance to get the correct exposure.

In truth and practice it wasn't that difficult, especially with the instant review on the LCD



The perspex cover slides back to allow a USB connector to be plugged in to charge the on board battery. This takes 1.5 hours to charge and the blue light indicates charging is taking place. In use, this light glows green to indicate the flash is ready to fire. If it glows red, the battery needs to be recharged

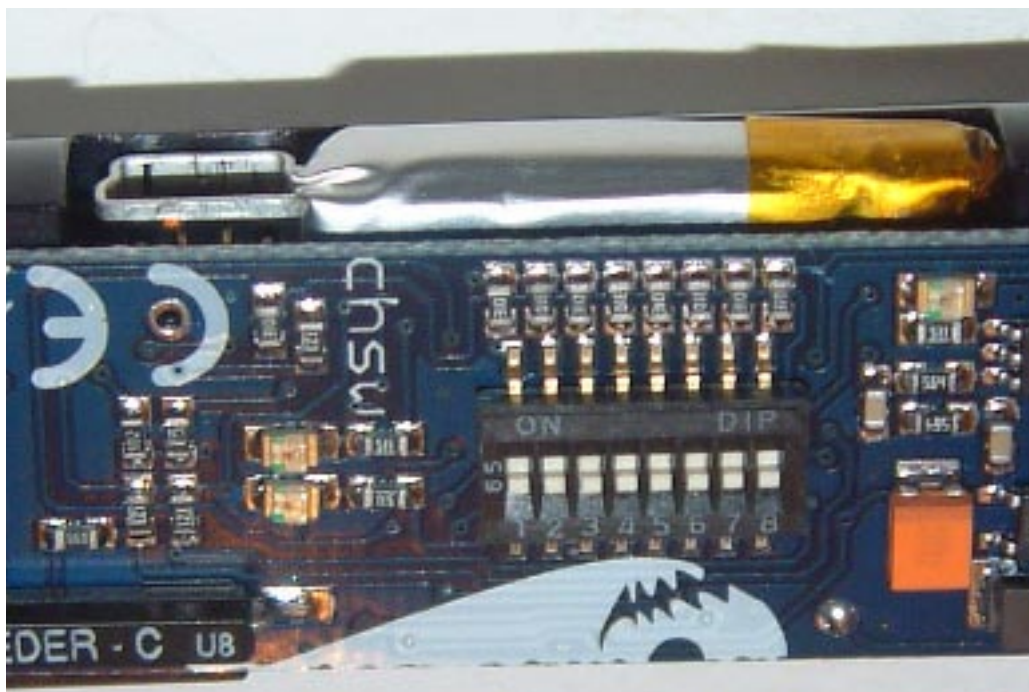
screen but it was only when I tested an Ikelite D80 housing and their iTTL conversion circuitry that I realised how useful TTL flash exposure really was.

As a Nikon D70 Subal user I had to return to manual flash exposure again after the test so I was delighted when German electronics manufacturer HeinrichsWeikamp sent me their "External converter for Nikon iTTL" to evaluate.

At this point I fully admit that I haven't got a clue how it works. My good old two wires have been replaced with centipede multiprocessors,



The converter connects in line between your camera housing and flashgun connector, shown here. In use, I taped mine to the base section of the arm for neatness. At the moment, the external converter is available only in a Nikon version for iTTL. The following cameras may be used with this external converter: D200, D2X, D40, D50, D70, D70s, D80, D3 (soon) and D300 (see HeinrichWeikamps web site for full details of compatible flashguns)



Most flashguns can be used straight away but some need to use different switch settings on the tiny on board DIP switch (Check their web site for full details). This switch can also be set to provide exposure compensation of +/- 3EV.

discreet components, surface mounted this and that and a ubiquitous USB socket. All I know, and all I need to know, is that it works and allows me to use a range of flashguns in the TTL mode. This in turn allows me to preset the aperture to give my desired depth of field and the TTL flash electronics will automatically adjust the light output to give a correct exposure.

This is a classic case of, if you want TTL flash exposure, get one of these. They're not cheap at €350

but when the alternative is to buy and house a Nikon land flashgun, it suddenly gets a lot cheaper.

To check if your camera/housing/flash combo can take advantage of the HeinrichsWeikamp External converter for Nikon iTTL, check their website

www.heinrichsweikamp.net

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