

Editorial

p***s envy

The recent arrival of the Nikon D3 and especially now the D700 has sent all techno geeks, including myself, into a state of panic. Firstly have I been so far out of the press release loop that I completely missed the D400, 500 and 600. Did these models come and go in an afternoon without me noticing? Is that how fast things are progressing now? And secondly how am I going to survive without this new camera?

Oh my god. It's better than mine. If he/she gets one, they'll be better than me. My camera's useless now. I must upgrade to keep up with the photographic Jones's. I'm nobody without that new camera and here comes the final, and all too familiar justification (which applies equally well to computers, hard drives and LCD TVs etc etc), if I get this new camera, it will do all I could ever want. It will be all I will ever need so, by buying it, I will put an end to the need to upgrade - ever again. The really sad thing is that I really believe myself - every time.

Housing design and manufacture

Fortunately I'm not old enough to remember the brass faceplate and multiple screw down bolt design of early underwater housings but I certainly was around in what I think will soon be known as the 'basic' times.

This was in the late 60's early 70's when a lathe was considered a fantasy and the norm was hand tools and perspex cement at a time when wetsuits were held together with Black Witch glue and yellow tape. This was the world of amateur underwater photography and in reality the commercial world of underwater photography equipment was not a great deal more sophisticated because of the small demand for such specialised equipment.

The majority of professional housings in those days were cast in aluminium using hardwood moulds and sand shaped by human hands and designed to withstand the heat and belching steam from molten metal. It was a live, performance process, a culmination of centuries of apprenticeship. The resulting castings were rarely identical and many had basic flaws right from the start but at least they could be remelted and re-used.

The mould making process and the machining of the resulting castings took several months but that was OK because the camera to be housed would be current for at least 3-4 years and even then its value wouldn't collapse as soon as a replacement model became available.

Nowadays it is a completely different process designed to get housings to market as quickly as possible before the camera is superseded. It is all computer controlled from design to assembly with a degree of repeatable precision and shape making capability which was impossible with human hands. In addition these machines can work "24/7/365". The only food they need is lubricating oil and raw material.

Just as the manufacturing process has changed so too have the designers. Their nimble young minds are not constrained by traditional materials and shapes. They can call upon composites and combinations which once seemed science fiction and as a result are reshaping our equipment world and providing us with unmatched performance.

Exciting times, Archie. Exciting times indeed.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com



Seatool Nikon D300 housing



Small and light enough to hand carry on aircraft, the Seatool ND300 offers exceptional underwater balance.

All camera controls are placed within easy reach, even for divers with small hands. The command dials and shutter release are exactly where you expect them to be for effortless operation, even one handed.

Your new Seatool ND300 housing comes standard with connections for optically fired strobes with optional single or dual Nikonos style bulkheads.

The Seatool ND300 offers three viewfinder options: Optical window, 45° or 180° Inon Magnifying Viewfinders.

www.reefphoto.com
www.seatoolusa.com