

The Patima Canon G9

(Plus, first impressions on the New Canon G10)

by John Cesere

The smell of diesel fuel swirls lightly through the cabin and settles in the forward areas where I have chosen to sit and write so that I might spare my laptop from the ocean's early morning greeting of splash and salty mist. My brother Dan stands close by with his dive group as he begins an energetic briefing about diving around the lava formations off the island of Lanai near Maui. It's been a while since I sat close enough to listen and feel the excitement in his voice as he stirs the interest in yet another group of divers. When he begins to explain some of the techniques of how to capture the light in First Cathedral I look up to see his group of photographers hanging on his every word excited to get going on another diving adventure.

As I look around the table, I realize that half of our students are diving with the Canon G9, and most of them are diving with the new Patima housing. As if our "job" of teaching and sharing our passion for the ocean through diving and photography isn't fun enough, we also get the opportunity to help our friends pick and choose their photography



equipment, which makes it feel like it's Christmas everyday.

Continuing to scan the table and equipment we helped select for each diver, it seems as though my brothers and I have been subconsciously steering all of our friends and dive buddies towards this exciting new Patima housing, I guess it's time to explain why; let's start with why we chose Canon's G9.

For a long time now we've been teaching underwater photography classes with the Canon G series cameras. We have always been impressed with the way the G series cameras can provide the tools of a much larger SLR camera in half the size. The Canon G9 can be used as a simple "point and shoot," but as a diver studies and learns about



the tools of true photography, the G9 can transform into an amazingly powerful, fully functioning, manually controlled, mini-SLR. All of the "big four" manual functions that are crucial to underwater photography are easily accessible: Shutter Speed, Aperture, ISO and White Balance.

ISO is probably the easiest function to change on the G9 and the high-powered CCD sensor is capable of providing clean/noiseless photos up to ISO 400, which is incredibly handy to an underwater photographer constantly dealing with ever changing lighting conditions. Shutter Speed



can be adjusted with the spin of the dial and after a press of a button the Aperture setting can be changed just as easily. Manually adjusting White Balance requires a few more steps but it is no more difficult than a normal SLR. To be honest, the White Balancing system on the G9 is the easiest and best Canon system I've used yet. What is even more impressive is that the G9's sensor does a really good job of setting the auto white balance, making it relatively easy for beginning underwater photographers to achieve professional looking results.

Probably the most amazing feature of the Canon G9 is that it has the capability to shoot RAW files, which store more than double the amount of information from a single photo than a traditional JPEG. Those digital shooters that are handy with Photoshop or similar editing programs will greatly appreciate the enormous amount of information provided by a RAW file. Don't be fooled however, even huge files and hours of editing won't fix a poorly composed/exposed photo, do your best to take the shot right the first time.

Another great feature of the Canon G9 is it's short shutter lag time (0.5 sec, in normal conditions) in comparison to other point and shoots on the market. Not only is the shutter lag manageable, (for a point and shoot) but also it's DIGIC III processor is fast, even when shooting in RAW you can shoot up to 1.7 fps!

For a long time, my brothers and I would recommend the underwater housing made by Canon as the best option for bringing the high powered Canon G9 underwater because the price point was hundreds of dollars cheaper than any other competitor and a bigger, boxier housing didn't seem to make sense on such a small camera. Plus, we have been such a fan of the fiber optic cable driven strobes on older point and shoot models that we thought that the decision to save hundreds and stick with the Canon housing was a no brainer.

It wasn't until we came across the new Patima housing that we began switching our opinion on which housing would be the one of choice to house the G9.

I guarantee that you will be sold on the Patima



Housing from your first sight of it; the sleek, fully machined metal, solid silver look is pretty awesome. When I first saw it I had the same feeling I had when I saw my first \$10,000 video housing, the Patima screams professional, durable and intimidating; which are qualities every diver wants in his or her equipment. Did I mention that the depth rating is said to be 400 feet?

As soon as I unlatched the housing to put my camera inside I received my first surprise. Hanging inside I found a neoprene cover for the hot shoe connector to keep the connection itself safe and the cover helped keep the connector from damaging anything else inside the housing, just a very nice touch.

The Patima also comes with two different port options. Both ports have a 67mm threaded end, which is great for attaching special wet mount lenses. I had a lot of fun with my old wide-angle wet mount lens on the Patima wide-angle port. I was again impressed with Patima when I did switch ports to the wide-angle setup because of the thought they put into the small details. The wide-angle port is tight to the G9's lens, which makes zooming impossible without an error and camera shut off, but the close port is necessary for nice wide-angle photography especially with a wet mount wide angle lens attachment. In order to keep the user from zooming with the wide angle setup attached Patima created the option for a pin that fits in place externally to keep the user from being able to use the zoom function, another great user-friendly idea.

When the Patima is in your hand it is a bit heavy but being heavy also makes it feel completely indestructible. All of the features



of the G9 work exactly as they do outside the housing, which is convenient and easy. The big four manual settings are just as easy to use underwater as they are on the surface. After only shooting a few times with the new housing, I was able to get acceptable color and exposure without any frustration from button pushing or dial spinning.

I was impressed with the Patima tray and handle setup because of the ability to adjust the amount of distance between the handles and the housing. Plus, with a variety of different arm-mounting options you can use most popular arm systems with the Patima tray and handle setup.

While diving with the Patima I found that I didn't use the handles to hold the setup while I was shooting; I ended up holding on to the housing itself, with my thumb wrapped around a conveniently placed metal protrusion which must have been designed as a hand hold. To be honest, I actually ended up taking off the supplied hand strap because I



found it to be in the way most of the time.

The only real negative that I found with the housing so far is the latch system used for securing the system closed and water tight. The latches are set so tight that they pop free quickly on opening, and they can catch your finger if you're not paying close attention.

In one day of shooting with this set up, I feel even more confident that my brothers and I have been making the right recommendations to our friends and dive buddies. We will continue to recommend the Patima

Housing for the Canon G9 to anyone looking for an amazing underwater point and shoot setup that has all the features and functionality of an SLR in a stylish professional package.

This just in! Canon started shipping its Canon G10, and I got to play with one! I've already spoken with Patima, and they are working on a housing too! I'm getting the feeling that Patima is saving the unveiling of the new G10 housing for DEMA.

The major upgrades from the G9 are that the G10 boasts an impressive 14.7 megapixels and a wide-angle lens, (the G9 was about a 35mm and



the G9, but the wide-angle lens and the Exposure Compensation dial are nice new features.

You might think that the price for the very popular G9 would drop with the introduction of the Canon G10? You would be wrong. In fact, the G9 was such a popular camera that most distributors couldn't keep them on the shelves, and Canon actually cancelled orders and stopped making the G9 when they were about to introduce the G10. So now the price of the remaining G9's are going up. This is a good situation for us consumers, it makes the decision to go for the G10 easy, or if you already have the G9 your happy because it's an awesome camera or you could sell the G9 and buy a G10 and have money left over for a Patima Housing.

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the new G10 is about 28mm.) The camera is a bit larger and seems to fit in your hand more like an SLR. Another major plus for underwater shooters is the addition of an exposure compensation dial. Canon added another dial by simply moving the ISO dial underneath the mode dial, it seems to work quite nicely, we'll see how it functions in a housing? All in all the G10 isn't a huge upgrade from



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