

Seahorn Snoot review

by Kay-Burn Lim

I have always been interested in snoot photography underwater but never had the chance to try one out. There are not many commercial units available out there, and with my time underwater being very precious to me, I never actually got around to trying to make and test one. You can imagine my delight when I heard that the Seahorn Snoot was available to buy and custom fit for various strobes. As one of the lucky few photographers that was accepted for the Timor Leste shootout, I was intent on trying something different and thought a snoot would do the trick. I was very pleasantly surprised.

What's a snoot you ask? Well, it's basically a funnel to channel light from a strobe into a narrow beam. This allows for very dramatic lighting, black backgrounds, gorgeous shadows, emphasis on a subject and less backscatter in crappy visibility. The possibilities are many and although tricky to use, produces wonderful results with a little patience and some thought spent before the shot (or dive). I had no experience whatsoever in using a snoot prior to this competition and it took me just a couple of dives to figure out a few

techniques to use it.

The Seahorn Snoot is well built and comes with an array of add-on attachments. These are used to produce a circular spot of light in various diameters. The main snoot/funnel attaches via 2 (or 3) velcro straps. Velcro stickers are included to place on your strobe. The hood itself also has a neoprene lining that allows for a snug fit. I have suggested that perhaps a bungee cord should be included. This was used in their prototypes but some complained about how it interfered with the strobe's control knobs. After using the snoot extensively over the 4 days of the competition, I must say that fiddling with velcro straps underwater isn't the most convenient thing to do, especially when wrestling with strobe arms. Scuba Symphony has assured me that they are looking into it for their next version. However, it was a very simple matter for me to fashion a bungee from zip ties and an elastic band. After a few minutes of crafting, I was good to go for the rest of the 3 days!

I must say that the Seahorn is a complete snooting system and much thought has gone into the



design of it. The various attachments included a cone to bring the size of the illuminated area to that of a small coin, an extension tube and finally a cap with a 1/2cm sized hole for really small subjects. There was also a honeycomb insert (for a much more defined spot as opposed to slightly diffused edges) and also some color

filters included. Although my snoot had an aluminum carabineer to clip on your BC, all the other attachments came in a nice gift bag. A small mesh bag will probably be needed to carry these bits in a convenient manner while diving. I used a mesh bag that came with my dive gloves to carry all these parts with me during the



competition.

Using a snoot means having to handle a fair amount of gear during a dive. It helps to have your buddy double as an assistant to help hold on to attachments as necessary. I found myself constantly changing attachments between subjects. It can be easy to become so engrossed in wrestling with your strobes that you forget your surroundings. Unless your buoyancy skills are excellent, make

sure you are aware of your surroundings and try not to damage coral beneath you or forget to monitor your depth as you focus on your gear. After I found a subject, I would hover at a respectable depth or find a clear patch somewhere to make my strobe adjustments before approaching.

I really love the lighting effects a snoot can give. A little creative lighting can go a long way in turning a common subject into a work of art.

Imagine a spotlight on your subject and the shadows it will cast before choosing your strobe angle. There is no fear of backscatter as you only light your subject. It truly is like having a modeling studio underwater! Certain shots I might not have considered with longer macro lenses in silty water were saved by using the snoot. During the photo competition, the two dives which I did using a 105mm macro lens on a Nikon D300 were the only times I came across Rhinopias (lacy and paddleflap species). With the water all silted up by other divers, I was hesitant to even bother with a shot as I needed to back away by almost a meter to take a photo. I removed the strobe and arm with the snoot attached, extended it out and held it over the Rhinopias to take my photos. Just like magic, no backscatter, a clear defined image, beautiful shadows and a wonderfully clean black background! I included both Rhinopia shots in my portfolio which managed to make first place in the competition. In fact, 5 of the 7 shots I submitted for the portfolio category were shot using the Seahorn snoot.

Overall, I was very pleased with the performance of the Seahorn. The various attachments included in the package allowed for a complete range of subjects to be covered. I highly recommend the Seahorn to anyone looking for a complete snooting system.

Pros: Custom fit for your strobe model, complete system

Cons/suggestions: Better attachment method required, inclusion of a simple mesh bag would be nice

Kay-Burn Lim

www.uwpmag.com