

Olympus M43 ZD 60mm F/2.8 Macro review

By Phil Rudin

The Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 60mm F/2.8 Macro lens was formerly announced during the Photokina 2012 show and has been available in limited quantities as of late September.

The Olympus ZD 60mm is the second dedicated macro lens for the ever growing M43 camera segment. I did a review on the first M43 macro, “Mirrorless Macros” covering the Panasonic-Leica 45mm Macro-Elmarit for M43 in UWP#65 which can be found in the “Back Issues” section of this magazine.

The ZD 60 macro is a very robust lens and Olympus second dust and splashproof (“weather-sealed”) lens for the M43. At 56 x 82mm the 60 macro is longer and thinner than the Panasonic 45 macro with a narrower 20 degree angle of view and full 1:1 magnification at a minimum focus distance of 18.80cm (7.4”). At 1:1 (life size) the image area covered is 17.3 x 13 mm or about 2:1 (twice life size) compared to a 35 mm macro lens at 1:1. This macro lens is movie and still compatible (MSC) which means it has a very quiet and fast auto focus function with a unique focus limiting system.

The lens barrel has a three position focus limiting dial which allows the lens to be set to focus from 0.19 meters (7.5”) or 1:1 to infinity, 4m (15.7”) to infinity or 0.19 to 0.4m. At the 0.19 to .4m focus limiting range the lens can focus from a reproduction ratio of 1:1 to about 1:6 auto focusing at high speed within this range. When in the .19 to .4m range the limiting dial can be rotated about five degrees counter-clockwise to focus to 1:1. At that



point if you release the dial and switch to manual focus the lens will not move off 1:1 and you can rock the camera in and out using the EVF to find sharp focus.

If you have AF assigned to a control button like the Fn1 button you would also be able to shoot all day at 1:1 as long as you don't push the Fn1 button when releasing the shutter. I can see this feature as being very useful with closeup lenses like the SubSee +5 and +10 magnifiers for getting true greater than life-size subjects into sharp focus. If your AF is a half press on the shutter release as soon as you push the shutter the lens will move off 1:1 and re-focus. While this lens has quite accurate auto focus the only real way to be sure you are at true 1:1 with any AF lens is to switch to manual when the lens is fully extended and rock to focus in the viewfinder. To aid me in the use of the EVF

I have added the optional Nauticam 45 degree accessory viewfinder to my NA-EM5 housing for



Longsnout Seahorse, Olympus E-M5, 60mm macro, Nauticam NA-EM5 Housing, ISO-200, 1/250th, F/7.1, Athena ARF-01 Ring-Flash shot in manual.



critical focusing. A useful window is also located on top of the lens which allows you to view a focusing scale from 1:1 to 1:4 so you will know the exact reproduction ratio the lens is focused to in the macro range. A large manual focus ring on the lens is useful when using this feature out of the water for closeup work. As I am writing this article a custom port has not yet been designed which allows access to the focus limiting dial on the 60 macro.

During my testing I set the lens at the two most useful focus limits, .19 to infinity which gives the full range of the lens and the .19 to .4m setting which remains within the most useful part of the macro/close-up range. In the full range I felt that the AF was quite good, with less hunting than my Panasonic 45 macro all the way to life-size. When limited in the .19 to .4m range AF was even faster IF the lens remained within the limited range. Move outside the range and the lens will hunt all day long looking for a subject within the range. This would be a great teaching aid for macro students who always tend to be too far from their subjects. The old instructor proverb of when you think you are close



enough cut the distance in half will apply nicely to this lens setting.

I found myself trying to shoot outside the maximum shooting distance (.4m) several times while using this setting. Once you get in the zone subject selection becomes quite easy and AF speed improves greatly.

Image quality throughout the focus range is outstanding, every bit as good as the well respected Olympus 50mm F/2 macro for 43 DSLR cameras and besting the Panasonic 45 macro in my view.

During my review I was shooting the 60 macro with the Olympus OMD E-M5 in the Nauticam NA-EM5 housing. I was using the Nauticam Flat Port 72 which is not designed for this lens. With this port the lens sits back at least 10mm or more from the inside of the port glass.

Since the lens has internal focus and does not extend this distance remained constant and will reduce the magnification of any closeup lens mounted in front of it. Nauticam has announced an intent to release a macro port designed for the lens which likely will allow full access to the focus



Seaweed Blenny, Olympus E-M5, 60mm macro, Nauticam NA-EM5 Housing, ISO-200, 1/250th, F/9, Two Inon Z-240 strobes shot in manual

limiting dial. The new port should fit any of the Nauticam housings for M43 cameras and those going forward. The lens will also fit into a verity of other ports for M43 cameras including the stock Olympus flat port for the Olympus line of PEN housings and the Olympus OMD E-M5 housing.

The lens will also fit into the Nauticam ED 12-50mm port and sit quite near the glass since the two lenses only have a 1mm length difference. This



Caribbean Sea Slug, Olympus E-M5, 60mm macro, Nauticam NA-EM5 Housing, ISO-200, 1/250th, F/8, Two Inon Z-240 strobes shot in manual

port has a 77mm thread, the wider port glass allows the 12-50 zoom not to vignette at the 12mm end and will require an 77 to 67mm adapter for 67mm closeup lenses or a 77mm flip adapter rather than the more common 67mm style.

The E-M5 has excellent low light auto focus and I did not find myself using a focusing light all that much even though it has become part of my macro kit on every dive. I very much prefer the twenty degree angle of view of the Olympus 60 macro to the wider twenty-seven degree view of the Panasonic 45 macro. It allows you to put a bit more distance between your subject and the lens when filling the frame which allows macro photographers to approach the most bashful of subjects.

If you are an avid macro photographer like I am the Olympus ZD 60mm macro should exceed

your needs on any M43 system with one of the proper ports choices for the lens. So with the focus limiting dial set prior to the dive or with a port that allows full access to the the control dial your results should be excellent. The Olympus M43 ZD 60mm F/2.8 macro is on sale now for \$499.00/£429.

A special thanks to NauticanUSA for use of the Flat Port 72 for this review.

Phil Rudin



JOIN THE REVOLUTION★

THE RISE OF THE COMPACT SYSTEM CAMERA



**LIKE DIVING?
LIKE PHOTOGRAPHY?
YOU'LL LOVE US**



London's premier underwater camera store

Ocean Leisure Cameras is the one-stop central London underwater photography specialist store.

Address:
11-14 Northumberland Ave
London, WC2N 5AQ
Underground: Embankment

Contact:
Phone: 020 7930 5051
info@oceanleisurecameras.com
www.oceanleisurecameras.com

Open 7 days a week

CAMERAS

HOUSINGS

LIGHTS

LENSES

COURSES

NEW PATIMA HOUSINGS NOW IN STOCK