

Starting simply

By Sue Hall

For camera-less divers who would love to take photographs of their underwater adventures, it can be difficult to know just where to start. It seems that every dive boat has a photographer these days, sporting the latest line in enormous metal housings with enough strobe power to illuminate Wembley Stadium. The 2 questions this brings to the novice's lips are "What is in there exactly?" and "How much?!"

Housed SLR camera systems are the choice of professionals. Fully automatic and horrendously expensive, they have been known to make grown men weep hysterically when the F word (flooding) is mentioned. Dome ports, ring flash, rear curtain sync - even the jargon sounds complicated and costly, deterring the interested diver who wants to take pictures of a better standard than a cheap underwater point and shoot camera, but doesn't know where to start.

But there is another option! The Sea and Sea Motormarine II ex is a sealed underwater camera with optional detachable flash and a choice of additional lenses from macro to wide angle. Simple to set up, light and portable in transit, neat and compact underwater, and with excellent quality optics, it is a versatile entry-level system that can produce stunning pictures without the cost and frustrations of an expensive housed camera system.

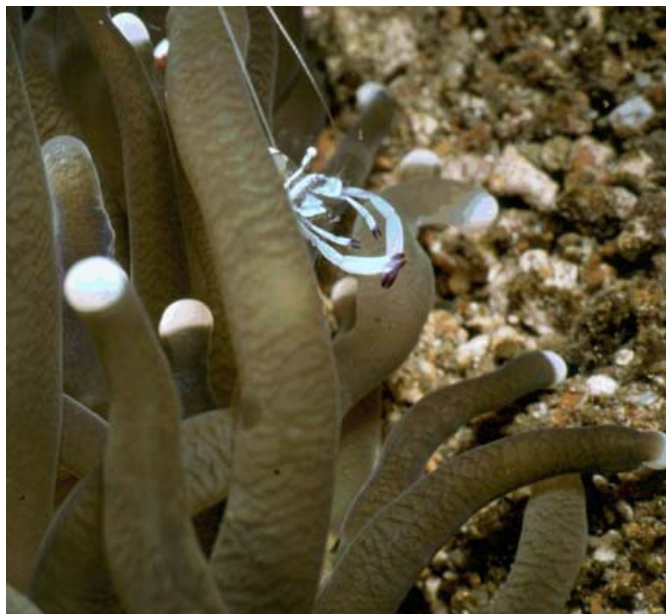
The Motormarine basic camera has a 35mm wide angle lens as standard, which can be transformed into anything from 20mm wide angle to 1:1 macro with a range of additional bayonet mount conversion lenses. As the conversion lenses need water between them and the camera lens to focus correctly, this means that a full range of lenses can be taken on a dive to cover everything from pygmy sea horses to whale sharks - definitely not an option with housed systems. Mounts are available which allow several lenses to be taken underwater together, although additional security (e.g. a cord tied around the lens and onto the strobe bracket) may provide an extra safeguard against dropping a lens into the blue on a sheer wall! And as the Motormarine is light and small, it can get much closer to objects - say a nudibrach hiding



Grouper; Little Cayman; Velvia; 20mm wide angle; 1/60s, f5.6

deep in a coral - than a housed system, and without trashing the actual thing you are trying to get a shot of. With the macro lenses, as long as the object is aligned within the spacer bars provided then that is the picture you will get. This means you don't always have to get down with the camera to look through the viewfinder (the focal length is pre-set according to the macro lens used).

I have generally found that one strobe (a YS60) provides sufficient lighting for my photographs. A bracket is provided which joins the strobe to the right or left of the camera and allows the strobe to be angled down at the subject. However, greater versatility can be had by detaching the strobe and manually pointing it at the subject - a spotter torch on the strobe makes



Cleaner shrimp; Sulawesi; Velvia; 2:1 macro; 1/60s, f16

accurately aiming the strobe a lot easier. Different effects can be obtained by placing the strobe at various distances below, above, and at the side of the object. It's all suck it and see, and it's all fun!

The down side of the Motormarine is that the refinements of a housed system (e.g. a Nikon F90 in a waterproof housing) are not available. The Motormarine is not a SLR camera, but has a wide-angle viewfinder as an additional extra, which makes framing a picture whilst wearing a diving mask a lot easier. And with advances in computer software and photo scanning, something that turns out a little wonky in print can be made to obey the law of thirds very easily with a little judicious cropping! There is no built-in light metering, and f-stop, shutter speed and distance are adjusted manually. Although this can be a bit of a distraction with wide angle, it does make the user think about light, depth of field etc, and is a good apprenticeship should he move on to a housed system later. Even the highest paid professional's mantra is "bracket, bracket, bracket". As a rule of thumb, a good starting point for wide angle is 1/60th of a second at f8; however this will vary enormously with film speed, cloud cover, time of day, depth, and whether the subject is set against silver sand or dark rocks. If there is someone else diving in your group with a housed system, ask them what their metered settings are (an interesting process underwater!) - it will give you a good



Nudibrach; Lembeh Straits; Velvia; 1:1 macro; 1/60s, f16



Devilfish; Lembeh Straits; Velvia; 2:1 macro; 1/60s, f16

starting point, bearing in mind they will alter with film speed. (With macro, depending on the lens used, the settings will be f16 or f22 because depth of field is not an issue - there are some good guidelines provided with the camera and lenses, and it is really worth reading them.) From experience, I have found that it is good practice to have at least one roll of film developed at the start of a dive trip. It can be quite expensive, but it will show if you are getting the exposure settings right, and if not whether you are under or over exposed - which can save a lot of disappointment when you get home!

The Motormarine systems can often be found for hire at dive centres both at home and abroad, and cost around £25-£40 per day to rent. A quick



Reef; Little Cayman; Velvia; 20mm wide angle; 1/60, f5.6

browse through dive magazines shows some excellent second hand bargains to be had, with a complete system (camera, strobe and lenses) for about £500. My own photographic portfolio has been acquired through rental equipment, and the generosity of my photography dive buddy and best friend Val Fox, who has loaned me her complete Motormarine system when not using it herself.

But a word of caution - underwater photography is addictive. And the more you get hooked, the less people want to dive with you. Even Best Buddies will sigh reluctantly when you mention taking the camera on a dive, complaining about the time you take to grease your o-rings, or to line up a shot, or the gestures you make underwater when you want them to pose naturally in a picture.

The answer? Get them to hire a Motormarine II and see how easy it is for themselves!

Sue Hall

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Underwater Photography

a web magazine

Guidelines for contributors

The response to UwP has been nothing short of fantastic. We are looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography. We are looking for work from existing names but would also like to discover some of the new talent out there and that could be you!

The type of articles we're looking for fall into five main categories:

Uw photo techniques -

Balanced light, composition, wreck photography etc

Locations -

Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards

Subjects

Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews -

Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities

Interviews with leading underwater photographers

**If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.**

My e mail is peter@uwpmag.co.uk

How to submit articles

To keep UwP simple and financially viable to produce we can only accept submissions by e mail and they need to be done in the following way:

1. The text for the article should be copied from your word processing file and pasted into the body of the e mail.

2. Images must be "attached" to the e mail and they need to be:

Resolution - 144dpi

Size - Maximum length 15cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 15 cm wide and verticals would be 15cm.

File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality

This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

3. Captions - **Each and every image MUST have full photographic details** including camera, housing, lens, lighting, film, aperture, shutter speed and exposure mode. These must also be copied and pasted into the body of the e mail.

We pay a flat fee of £50 (+VAT if invoiced).

I look forward to hearing from you.

