

Nauticam Carbon Fiber Float Arms

By Phil Rudin

Most underwater photographers tend to do an excellent job of controlling their buoyancy while diving. This is not always the case however when it comes to their photography and videography equipment. I cannot stress enough how important having a well balanced housing system can be to the success or failure of your photo goals.

Attempting to remain motionless in a fluid environment is difficult enough without the added issues associated with an overweight imaging system. Over the years I have experimented with several do-it-yourself and commercially available products from closed cell foam blocks to aluminum air filled tubes and while many have worked fairly well they have not provided the lift to size ratio I would have wished for.

Nauticam has recently released a new and innovative line of carbon fiber float arms which are now widely available at your authorized Nauticam dealer. Nauticam carbon fiber float arms are manufactured from carbon fiber tubing with plastic end caps and standard aluminum ball end with the

distinct blue Nauticam O-ring. Using high quality materials the carbon fiber tubes are sealed with O rings to ensure complete water tight integrity and include an aluminum "spine" that secures the entire assembly. This process allows the carbon fiber arms to be stronger than those machined from solid aluminum.

These arms have a depth rating of 100 meters and will not compress at depth like some foam blocks will. The hydrodynamic design moves more easily through the water.

Five times stronger and about one-third the weight of steel Nauticam carbon fiber arms provide about 50% more buoyancy than current aluminum strobe arms of the same length.

In addition Nauticam offers a full line of strobe arms, clamps, trays and mounting hardware of a unique design. The carbon fiber arms come in five sizes. The 60mm (2.3inch) diameter arms come in 200mm, 250mm and 300mm lengths (8,10,12") as measured from O-ring to O-ring. The 90mm (3.5") arms come in 150mm and 200mm lengths (6 &



8") total lift ranges from 240 to 655 grams (8.5 to 23.1oz.) of lift. The carbon fiber arms range in price from £70.00 to £95.00, US \$80.00 to \$120.00. Because these arms are very light they will be excellent for travel given the current weight restrictions.

I tested two of the 60 X 200mm length arms with my NA-EM5 housing and Zen Underwater 170mm optical glass dome port using a Panasonic 7-14mm zoom, 20mm extension, two additional 10mm arms and two Inon Z-240 strobes. The smaller mirrorless housings have little space around the camera and tend to be heavy even for their smaller size v. DSLR housings. I was diving in a strong current and found that the arms did not tend to



collapse backwards when pointed into the current - a welcome advantage when diving the gulf stream off Florida. I was able to easily control the housing with one hand using the right grip on the Nauticam flex tray. I also used the arms with a single triple

clamp mounted to a ball on the cold shoe at the top of the housing. Once again using my right hand with the wrist strap and no tray I had excellent balance with one hand. I also used a single float arm with the Olympus 60mm macro and macro port, using the wrist strap. I was hand holding the Inon Z-240 with a Saga snoot in my left hand while trying to focus and point a very narrow beam of light onto a very small area of my subject, see my Saga Snoot review in this issue. This configuration was the most difficult for getting a super sharp exposure and the addition of the single float arm made the process a

great deal easier.

With an endless number of configurations to explore the Nauticam carbon fiber float arms are well worth considering for your buoyancy control needs.

Phil Rudin



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