

Shooting Squid

by Dan Bolt

Cast your mind back to March 2013 and more specifically UWP no.71 – it's the one with Alex Tattersall's gorgeous Sea Lion image on the cover. I was electronically thumbing my way through that edition because I re-read UWP back-issues quite often when I'm looking for inspiration. Photographic fashions may come and go, but good technique is an absolute through it all and for me issue no.71 is memorable for a great article by Ryo Minemizu entitled 'Shooting Ocean Drifters'.

In that article Ryo discussed shooting small mid-water critters with a complicated macro lighting setup which produced some very intriguing images. My interest in the techniques discussed back in 2013 was recently rekindled during a night-dive under one of my local piers. The amount of marine life that comes onto the shallow sand at this site is truly amazing and made more so given that most life topside has gone into hibernation for the winter. One of the regular visitors to this spot throughout the winter are large numbers of the juvenile form of the Common Squid (*Loligo vulgaris*) which measure between 2 and 5cm in length. It is these little creatures that reminded me of Ryo's article, and so I decided to see if I could reproduce the same stunning images he was getting of similar subjects.

Kit-wise it's fairly straight forward;

two snooted strobes pushed forward to create a 'sweet-spot' of light to highlight the subject against a black background. Knowing how quick the baby squid can be, I opted to use my fastest focusing lens; in this case the superb Olympus 12-40mm f/2.8 Pro. Adding a spotter torch on the top of my Aquatica AEM1 housing and the setup was complete.

As I eventually found out (after much underwater swearing!); working with this technique gave me a sphere of light/focus no more than 10cm across within which I had to place my fast-moving subject (hopefully striking a nice pose too) and boy was that hard work! At first the squid are very jumpy and will not let you get close enough to place them in the 'zone'; staying with them for a few minutes yielded a noticeable change in behaviour when they seemed to accept the camera's presence and calm down, once or twice even hunting in the torch light.

This change in attitude gave a surprising number of photographic

Paignton Pier at night. Panasonic GM1, 8mm fisheye, f/3.5, 1sec, iso800

Night squid

Olympus EM-1, Olympus 12-40mm, f/7.1, 1/320th, iso320



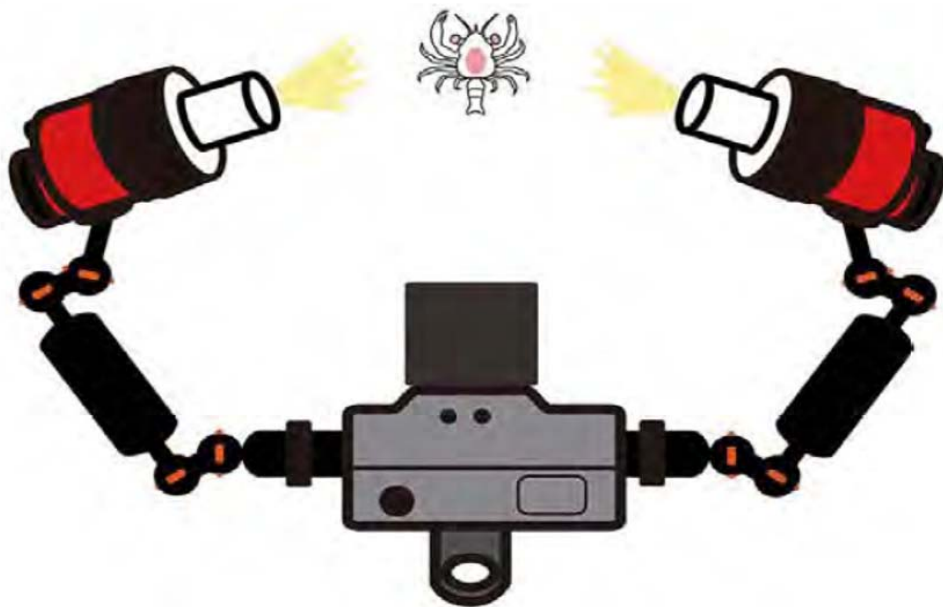


Illustration by Ryo Minemizu in UWP 71

opportunities – even allowing me to shoot some narrow depth-of-field images as well as waiting for ‘peak-action’ shots too. Being the UK in winter, no dive would be complete without a healthy amount of backscatter; in this case the sand being kicked up by the swell rolling over my head. If the squid stayed close to the sea-bed the sand in the water provided for a beautiful star-like backdrop to the images; if it moved a few feet into the water column the sediment levels dropped off, making nice, black backgrounds very easy to achieve with such a focused approach to lighting.

The final thing my buddy & I learned from our dives was this; composing and accurately focusing on a fast-moving subject was far and away

easier with the Olympus EM-1’s large rear-screen that is was using a Nikon D7200’s viewfinder – one-up for the Micro Four-Thirds shooters ;)

Dan Bolt

www.underwaterpics.co.uk



Don't settle for 2nd best



Film - No Filter No
White Balance



Digital - No Filter Manual
White Balance



Magic Filter Manual
White Balance

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards. These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

www.magic-filters.com