

Panasonic GX80/85 and Nauticam NA-GX85

by Peter Rowlands

It is 3 years since I upgraded my camera to a Panasonic GX7 and I have been extremely impressed with its performance and have really enjoyed shooting with it in my Nauticam housing.

I shoot mostly available light video and the GX7's manual white balance capability is excellent. I can't recall a time when it has failed to produce a good balance and it has the ability to manually tweak it if required. My main lens combination is the Panasonic 14-42 EZ lens with the Nauticam WWL-1 wide wet lens and this produces crisp images throughout the zoom range. So why am I considering upgrading?

As a video shooter the big development in the past 3 years has been the introduction of 4k video. This is effectively almost 4 times the quality of Full HD (or 2k) and the difference is immediately visible and highly desirable! And don't forget that the GX80/85 is no slouch when it comes to stills. The 16mp sensor provides excellent detail without SD card sapping file sizes.

Another significant improvement is Dual IS, which combines in-body 5-axis and in-lens image stabilization. This will make shooting steady video much easier and will allow still photographers to get away with a slower shutter speed than previously.

As a result of the above I caved in an 'invested' in a Panasonic GX80 which for some reason is the GX85 in north America. However I only committed the cash when I knew that Nauticam were making a

housing for it because, strangely enough, the GX80 is not my choice of camera on land. Like most small cameras they are quite fiddly with most of controls near each other and the ergonomics for shooting video is not ideal. As a result I use a conventional video camera, the Panasonic HC-VXF990, for topside.

Underwater however in a Nauticam housing the GX80/85 really comes into its own so I was delighted to be able to spend a couple of days with this combination.

At first sight the Nauticam NA-GX85 looks, and is, slightly smaller than the NA-GX7 and this is due, in part, to the flowing curved surfaces which to my eye are absolutely beautiful and mechanically impressive but they also make the housing much more tactile. Holding the housing is very comfortable and all of the day to day controls fall easily to hand. With an Olympus 8mm F1.8 fisheye and a Zen dome, this is going to make a great, compact combination.

The Panasonic GX80/85 has a tilting LCD screen which is a preference of mine and in the housing this is tilted 15° which provides a significantly better viewing angle. The only problem for me is that the EVF port and Fn4 and Fn3 buttons get in the way of the screen and I would prefer just a plain perspex port for cleaner viewing because a) the EVF is not particularly good and b) I personally have never used the function buttons.





Supplied with the housing are two stainless steel plates and an assortment of screws together with a trigger lever. These are designed to attach to Nauticam's handles and tray accessory so if you don't already have them, it will cost approximately £150 extra depending on the combination you choose. The good news is that the trigger lever transforms the performance of the housing and is much more like a video camera would be operated for movement free shooting. This also applies for stills shooting and is a much more natural way of 'triggering' the shutter.

Apart from the above, the NA-GX85 is all that I have come to expect from Nauticam providing all the usual familiar controls. The only



slight change is that the leak detector/ Vacuum LED is now on the top of the housing rather than at the back which makes it much more visible.

I'm looking forward to another 3 years of enjoyable shooting.

The Nauticam NA-GX85 body costs £1344 and is available from www.nauticam.co.uk

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