

Sealife DC2000 camera

by Jussi Hokkanen

American company Sealife, has over the years, offered all sorts of cameras for underwater photographers. They have ranged from a basic all-in-one happy snappy shooter to more “mid-range” camera plus housing packages.

All in all I’ve never been a big fan of the company’s products. Somehow their camera systems have always been sub-standard and when it comes to technical specs, trailed back a few camera generations. It looks like Sealife is now stepping in with a camera that has up-to-date features, at least on paper. The Sealife DC2000 is the latest WiFi-enabled offering from the company that will challenge the major players in the ever narrowing compact camera marketplace.

Unlike the recent built-in Sealife cameras the new DC2000 goes back to the traditional idea of a separate, removable camera inside a housing.

The new camera is waterproof to 18m on its own, which is sure to give users some peace of mind. Just make sure that you don’t pop the camera in the housing when it is wet, say... just after you have been snorkelling with it. That is a sure way to ruin your images as moisture will condensate

and fog up the insides the of the housing and the lens.

The big news is that the DC2000 camera features a 20 Megapixel Sony made 1” type CMOS sensor. This immensely popular sensor can be found from Sony’s high-end compact cameras like the RX100 range. It can also be found inside many other brand cameras like the Canon G7XII, G9X and the Nikon 1 range. So in theory the image quality should be top notch.

For this review I compared the DC2000 camera with Sony RX100 MKIV. You can see the results below: First the Jpeg comparison and then RAW comparison

All in all the DC2000 image quality is not bad. Unfortunately the Sealife jpeg image processing leaves room for improvement. However, when comparing the raw footage the differences between the two are negligible. After seeing the raw footage it is easy to believe that the sensor is indeed the same one in both the Sony and the Sealife.

The weirdest thing with the DC2000 is the lens choice. For one reason or another the manufacturer has chosen a fixed 31mm (equivalent) lens for the camera. My guess is that

they had no option if they wanted to make the camera depth rated to 18m.

Unfortunately the 31mm fixed lens is problematic for underwater photography. In water, with the added magnification effect, the lens’ focal length is near 40mm. This means that is neither wide enough for any kind of UW wide-angle photography nor long enough for proper close-up photography.

A fast fixed 31mm f1.8 lens is something a street photographer



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would want to use but for any underwater pics, a step above your most basic snaps, it is near useless.

To get useful shots with the DC2000 you will need to get the Sealife DC SL975 fisheye attachment lens that snaps on the front of the



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Sealife DC2000 with DC SL975 fisheye lens

housing. This lens transforms the 31mm focal length to a very useful 19mm super wide-angle. The price goes up though.

Sealife does not currently offer a close-up attachment lens for the DC range cameras so for macro photography you have to rely on what the camera has to offer. The closest focus distance with the DC2000 is 9cm when in macro or super macro mode which is pretty decent for a narrow angle lens like this. Especially considering that many today's compact cameras with zoom lens only focus this close with their lens in the wide-angle position, which nowadays is usually 24mm. You have to cast away your hopes of proper super macro photography with the Sealife though, unless some sort of close-up lens is introduced.

Sealife has always marketed their cameras as the easiest underwater cameras to use. The blocky menus and large dials of the DC2000 lean towards

the "UW photography-for-dummies" idea. This is not necessarily a bad idea as there are lots of divers who just want to capture underwater images with a minimum of effort. For example, there are easy to select underwater scene modes that are separated by depth. You can also set pre-programmed modes for external strobes or video lights.

Where the DC2000 differs from the previous Sealife models is that it also offers advanced functionality for people who are more in to their underwater photography. For example: You get A, S and full manual exposure modes with real aperture. You get a full manual white balance with dedicated underwater pre-sets. You also get RAW capture and Full HD movies up to 60fps. When it comes to the features the Sealife DC2000 is by far the most competent camera this manufacturer has ever put up for sale.

The DC2000 is a chunky piece of kit.

Compared to the Sealife micro 2.0 camera it looks like a giant. The housing is sturdy and rubber-coated with very clearly marked, easy to press buttons. A nice touch is the internal slot for the "moisture muncher" capsule. This is what Sealife calls the supplied blue desiccant capsules that keep the moisture inside the housing at bay.

Unfortunately the port of the housing does not have a thread for lens attachment. Instead it has Sealife's own so called DC clip-on mount. This means that only one current DC lens, the DC Fisheye-lens, will work. I personally would have hoped for the generic 67mm thread. This way people would have been able to use all sorts of widely available lenses. This would surely have lowered the purchase threshold for people who already have a pile of M67 lenses at home.

People with fibre optic cable triggered strobes can consider themselves more fortunate as the



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DC2000 ships with a clip-on strobe sync plate that accepts two standard “bare” fibre optic cable ends.

The new DC2000 camera is by far the best camera Sealife has ever introduced. Spec-wise it’s up there with today’s high end compact cameras. There is one caveat. To get it working properly underwater you will need to get the accessory wide-angle lens. The DC2000 camera lens is just too narrow angle for underwater photography.

The camera costs £669 in the UK and the lens is £250.00 bringing the total spending to just over £900. This might just be too much and lots of people will be put off by the cameras inability to get close to larger subjects without the lens.

In reality, of course, you will

eventually have to buy a wide-angle lens for any other compact cameras on the market too but at least these cameras start from acceptable 24mm focal length and have housings with threaded ports for standard lenses.

In conclusion: Best Sealife camera to date but proceed with caution.

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