

DIVE GEAR

NEWS and REVIEWS of DIVE EQUIPMENT and ACCESSORIES



GURU HEADQUARTERS Sue Drafahl and Bill Harrigan assembled many of the systems we tested on Cayman Diving Lodge's *Eastern Skies* dive boat. Cayman Diving Lodge and Compass Point Resort were our base for this guru weekend taking our experts to some of the best dive sites off the East End.

JACKIE D'ANTONIO

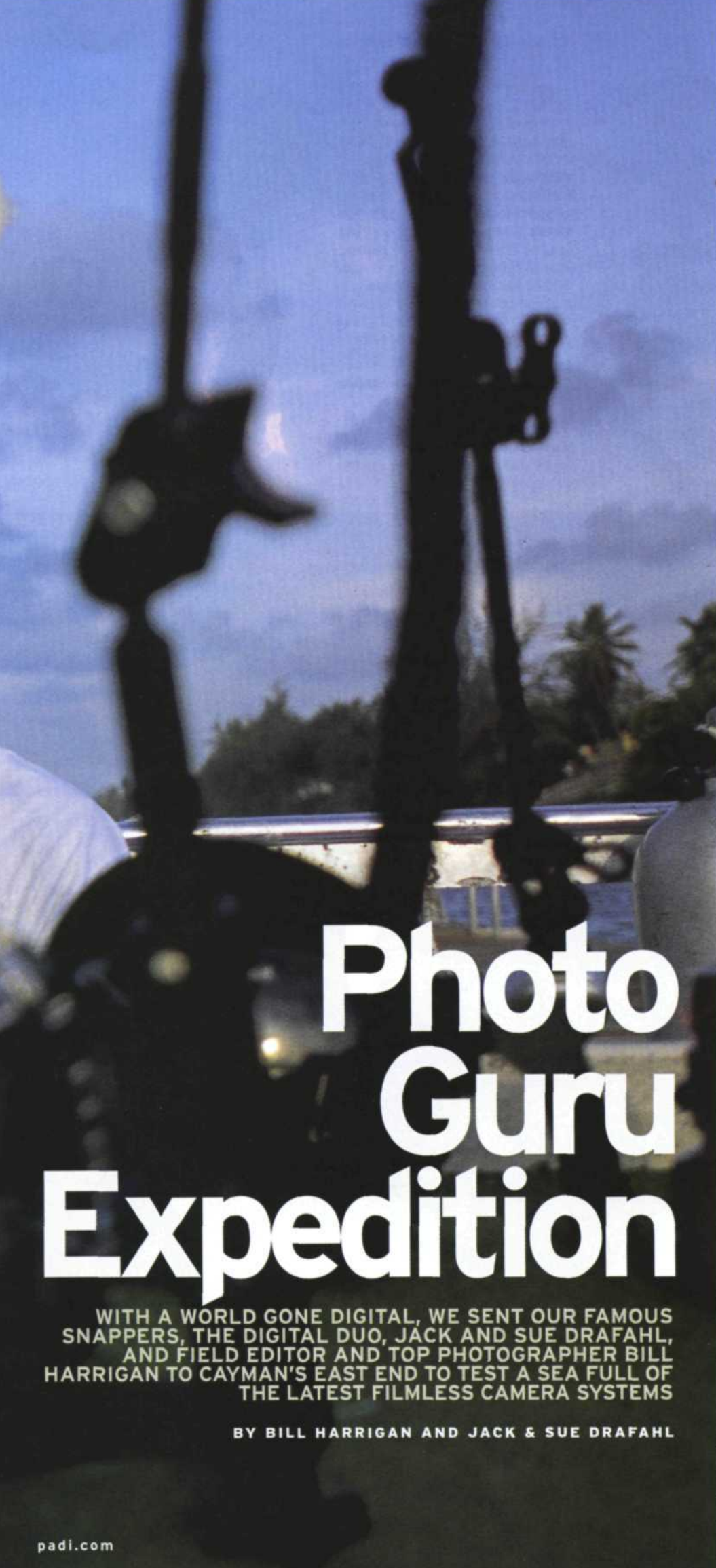


Photo Guru Expedition

WITH A WORLD GONE DIGITAL, WE SENT OUR FAMOUS SNAPPERS, THE DIGITAL DUO, JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL, AND FIELD EDITOR AND TOP PHOTOGRAPHER BILL HARRIGAN TO CAYMAN'S EAST END TO TEST A SEA FULL OF THE LATEST FILMLESS CAMERA SYSTEMS

BY BILL HARRIGAN AND JACK & SUE DRAFAHL

When we put out the call for the latest and greatest in underwater-photo equipment, we knew we would receive a good number of digital systems. But we didn't expect them *all* to be digital. So we did what all good editors do — we called in the experts. With photo gurus Bill Harrigan and Jack and Sue Drafaahl in tow, we headed out to the renowned East End of Grand Cayman to see what these systems could do.

We tested everything from basic point-and-shoot cameras all the way up to professional systems with all the bells and whistles. The visibility in the East End was phenomenal, and there were plenty of sites for our gurus to explore during our digital shootout. Dive after dive they pushed these cameras to their limits to find out what worked and what didn't. We could barely keep them dry long enough to download the images.

SEA & SEA DX-3100 AQUAPIX WITH ULTRALIGHT CONTROL SYSTEMS (ULCS) TRAY AND ARMS

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Sea & Sea 3.14-megapixel, amphibious camera **MEDIA** Smart Media **IMAGE SIZE** 2048 x1536, printable to 8x10 **ACCESSORIES** Modular wet-mount lenses: 20 mm; macro framer; close-up lens **FEATURES** Built-in color filter and macro lens. **STROBE** On-board flash with diffuser; optional DX-25 can be used with a fiber-optic cable **CAMERA TRAY AND ARMS** Ultralight Control Systems Tray with padded grip and single-strobe ball connector; shown with spotting light mount, but myriad options available for most needs

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The world's first amphibious point-and-shoot digital camera — perfect for the casual or beginner/intermediate shooter looking for a compact, modular and easy to use system

CONTACT

www.seaandsea.com;
www.ulcs.com

For Jack and Sue's field test with this camera system, go to page 99.



OLYMPUS 5050 IN LIGHT & MOTION TETRA 5050 HOUSING/ ULCS ARMS/SEA & SEA YS-90 STROBE

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Olympus 5050, five megapixels **MEDIA** Multiple: Compact Flash, x-D **IMAGE TYPE** Multiple: TIFF, RAW, JPEG and more **FEATURES** 3x optical zoom, f/1.8 lens, 35 to 105 mm equivalent, ISO 100-400 **HOUSING TYPE** Light & Motion Tetra 5050 **KEY FEATURES** ROC strobe control system, wet-mate wide-angle and macro lenses, and compact size **STROBE** Sea & Sea YS-90 **STROBE ARMS** Ultralight Control Systems adjustable arms

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sophisticated yet intuitive imaging system for intermediate/advanced photographers

CONTACT

www.lightandmotion.com;
www.seaandsea.com;
www.ulcs.com; www.olympus.com

For Bill's field test with this camera system, go to page 99.



SEALIFE REEFMASTER DC250

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE SeaLife ReefMaster DC250, 2.1 megapixels (DC300 and 310 come with 3.3 MP) **MEDIA** 8 MB Internal; SD media external **IMAGE TYPE** JPEG; movie-JPEG capable **FEATURES** Point-and-shoot simplicity **HOUSING TYPE** SeaLife, rubber-armored, tested to 200 feet **KEY FEATURES** One-button operation; land, sea and external flash mode, expandable with 3x or 8x macro lenses, or SD970 wet-mount wide-angle; can accommodate one or two external strobes **STROBE** External slave **CAMERA TRAY AND ARMS** SeaLife

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Great beginner camera with multiple imaging possibilities

CONTACT

www.sealife-cameras.com

For Bill's field test with this camera system, go to page 99.



Olympus 5060/Olympus housing



SeaLife ReefMaster



Canon Rebel/Aquatika A300 housing



CANON EOS DIGITAL REBEL IN AQUATICA A300 HOUSING WITH IKELITE 125 STROBES AND TECHNICAL LIGHTING CONTROL (TLC) ARMS

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Canon Digital Rebel, 6.3 MP, CMOS sensor and digital-imaging processor **MEDIA** Supports type I and II media cards **IMAGE MODE** Multiple; can shoot JPEG and RAW simultaneously **KEY FEATURES** Full-featured, SLR-type, 12 shooting modes, seven-point autofocus, compact, lightweight body **HOUSING TYPE** Aquatica A300 **KEY FEATURES** Fingertip access

to key camera controls, a bright viewing system, a precision-cast-aluminum body built to military specs; and an ergonomic design **STROBE** Two Ikelite DS-125s **STROBE ARMS** Technical Lighting and Control Systems, ball-mount, O-ring-free connectors

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sophisticated, versatile, pro-level imaging system

CONTACT

www.ikelight.com; www.aquatika.ca

For Bill's field test with this camera system, go to page 101.

STUDIO PHOTOS: BILL DOSTER



FUJI S2 PRO IN AQUATICA HOUSING WITH TLC STROBE ARMS AND IKELITE 125 STROBES

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Fuji S2, 12 megapixels **MEDIA** Dual slots for Smart Media and IBM Microdrive **IMAGE MODE** Multiple **KEY FEATURES** Full-featured, pro-level digital SLR (takes Nikon-mount lenses), TTL compatible **HOUSING TYPE** Aquatica S2 **KEY FEATURES** Fingertip access to key camera controls, bright viewing system, a precision-cast-aluminum body

built to military specs; and an ergonomic design **STROBE** Two Ikelite DS-125s **STROBE ARMS** Technical Lighting and Control Systems, ball-mount, O-ring-free connectors

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Sophisticated, versatile, pro-level imaging system with the top-of-the-group image size

CONTACT

www.ikelight.com; www.aquatica.ca

For Jack and Sue's field test with this camera system, go to page 102.



NIKON D100 IN IKELITE HOUSING WITH 125 STROBES AND TLC STROBE ARMS

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Nikon D100, 6.1 megapixels **MEDIA** Compact Flash type I and II; IBM Microdrive **IMAGE MODE** Multiple, JPEG, TIFF, RAW and NEF **KEY FEATURES** Full-featured, pro-level digital SLR **HOUSING TYPE** Ikelite **KEY FEATURES** Compact, ergonomic, intuitive, magnified image view for easier framing and composition **STROBE** Two Ikelite DS-125s **STROBE ARMS** Ikelite, ball-mount, push-button, removable strobe arms for maximum lighting versatility

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Impressive flexibility and ease of use; this pro-level system helps make the transition from film to digital much easier to handle

CONTACT

www.ikelight.com

For Jack and Sue's field test with this camera system, go to page 102.



Fuji S2/Aquatica housing



Nikon D100/Ikelite housing



Sea & Sea DX3000

SEA & SEA DX-3000

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Ricoh Caplio G3 series, three-plus megapixels **MEDIA** Secure Digital memory card **IMAGE MODE** Multiple **KEY FEATURES** Flexible point-and-shoot, easy to use, inexpensive. Can take the MX-10 modular, wet-mount 20 mm wide-angle lens, macro framer, and close-focus lens **HOUSING TYPE** DX-3000G **STROBE** On-board, or external YS-25 connected with fiber-optic cable **STROBE ARMS** Single, flexible DX arm and tray

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

A do-everything point-and-shoot that works well for beginner and intermediate shooters; Jack and Sue keep one on hand to use as a backup to their pro system

CONTACT

www.seaandsea.com

For Jack and Sue's field test with this camera system, go to page 103.





OLYMPUS 5060 IN IKELITE HOUSING WITH 125 STROBE

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Olympus 5060, 5.1 megapixels **MEDIA** Compact Flash type and xD **IMAGE MODE** Still image: TIFF, JPEG, DCF (Design rule for Camera File system), PIM2 (Print Image Matching), **MOVIE MODE**: QuickTime® motion JPEG **KEY FEATURES** Compact, multi-position LCD and capture, 4x optical wide-angle lens, dual media slots, available movie mode. **HOUSING TYPE** Ikelite **KEY FEATURES** special conversion circuitry, single or dual sync cord capabilities, molded of corrosion free clear polycarbonate, weighs less than 6 pounds. **STROBE** Ikelite 125 **STROBE ARMS** Ikelight tray and removable arm system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Powerful options in a small package for intermediate/advanced photographers, especially those interested in advanced wide-angle imaging possibilities

CONTACT

www.ikelite.com

For Jack and Sue's field test with this camera system, go to page 104.

OLYMPUS 5060 HOUSING SYSTEM AND ULCS TRAY/ARM

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Olympus 5060, 5.1 megapixels **MEDIA**: Compact Flash type and xD cards **IMAGE MODE**: Still image: TIFF, JPEG, DCF (Design rule for Camera File system), PIM2 (Print Image Matching), **MOVIE MODE**: QuickTime® motion JPEG **KEY FEATURES**: Compact, multi-position LCD and capture, 4x optical wide-angle lens, dual media slots, available movie mode. **HOUSING TYPE**: Olympus PT-020 **KEY FEATURES**: Double o-ring construction, clear polycarbonate case **STROBE** Olympus FL-20 flash **STROBE ARMS** Ultralight Control Systems strobe arms with ball mount connectors on an Ultralight single strobe tray.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Nice, compact system – great for travel and advanced/intermediate users

CONTACT

www.olympus.com; www.ulcs.com

For Jack and Sue's field test with this camera system, go to page 104.



Olympus 5060/Ikelite housing



Nikon D100/Light & Motion Titan housing



NIKON D100 IN LIGHT & MOTION TITAN HOUSING WITH ULCS STROBE ARMS AND IKELITE 125 STROBES

SYSTEM SPECS

CAMERA TYPE Nikon D100, 6.1 megapixels **MEDIA** Compact Flash type 1 and II; IBM Microdrive **IMAGE MODE** Multiple, JPEG, TIFF, RAW, NEF **KEY FEATURES** Full-featured, pro-level digital SLR **HOUSING TYPE** Light & Motion, anodized aluminum **KEY FEATURES** Slide in camera tray, bayonet mount ports, double O-ring seals, fully electronic fingertip controls, infrared smart grip controls, ROC strobe for fully controlled, strobe independent lighting exposure

STROBE Two Ikelite DS-125s **STROBE ARMS** Ultralight Control Systems, ball mount, fully adjustable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Impressive flexibility and ease of use, this pro-level system makes the transition from film to digital much easier to handle

CONTACT

www.lightandmotion.com; www.ulcs.com (strobe arms)

For Bill's field test with this camera system, go to page 107.

STUDIO PHOTOS: BILL DOSTER

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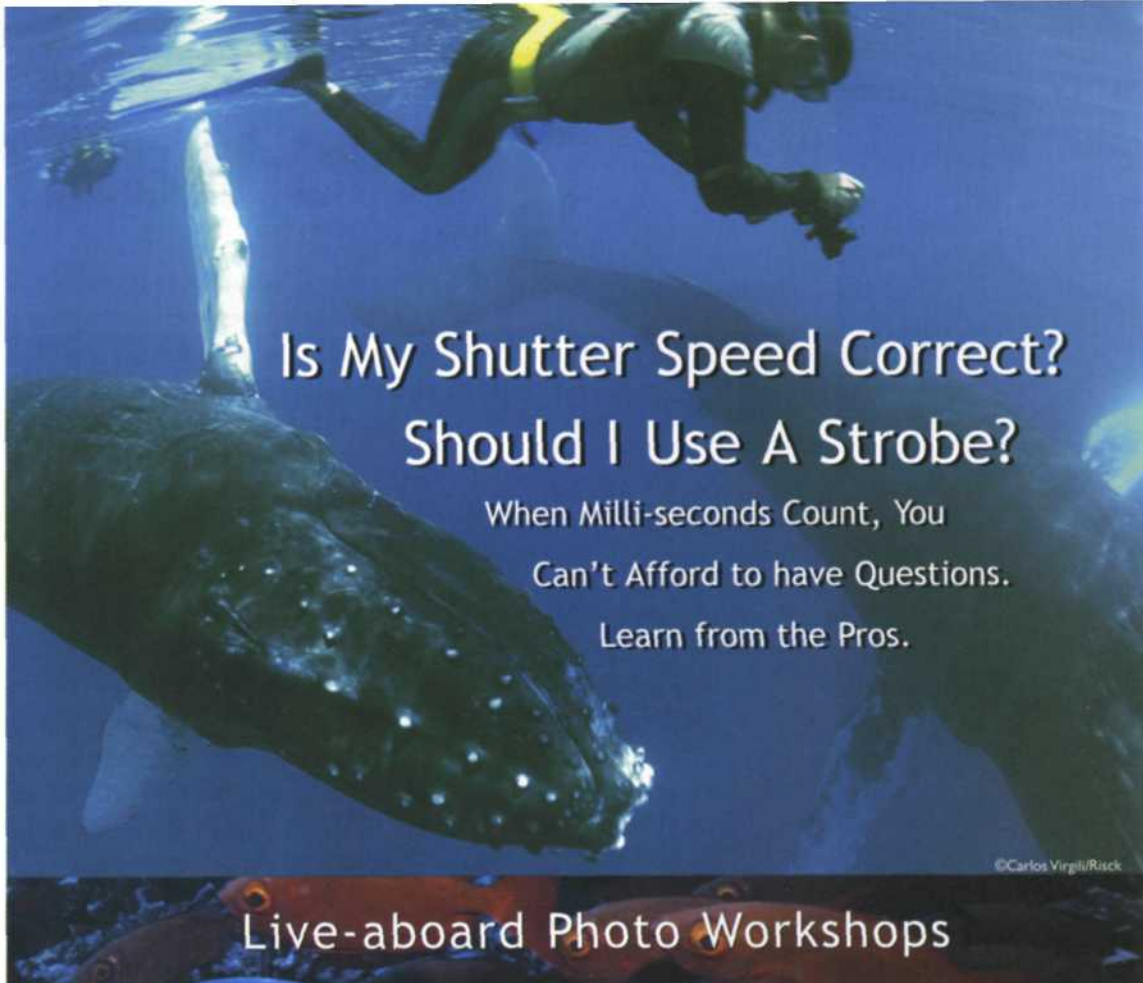
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CONTACT

www.pelican.com; www.uwkinetics.com



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DIVE GEAR *Continued from page 43*

SEA & SEA DX-3100 AQUAPIX

Touted as the first amphibious underwater camera, the 3.14-megapixel Aquapix from Sea & Sea is compact and easy to use. The front of the camera has a bayonet mount that takes all the lenses from the modular Sea & Sea MX-10 camera system, which means you can use the 20 mm, macro framer and even the fish close-up lens to expand the capabilities of the Aquapix. It takes readily accessible AA batteries and a Smart Media memory card through the sealed side door.

The Aquapix has a built-in color filter and a macro lens, as well as an internal flash. The on-board flash has a diffuser that can be used or removed with the flip of a switch. Although the on-board flash is fine for many situations, the auxiliary DX-25 is an option when you require more powerful lighting. The camera mounts to the standard camera tray that sports a flexible arm designed to hold the DX-25 strobe and fiber-optic cable.

Underwater, we found that we had three choices when using the Macro/Color Filter switch. When we switched the camera to Color Filter, we got great color images down to 30 feet without using a flash. When we wanted to use the flash to photograph fish and other medium-sized animals, we switched the camera to the middle position, which turned the flash on, and changed the ISO from 50 to 100. Shooting macro subjects was a matter of moving the switch to the macro position and adjusting the power of the Sea & Sea DX-25 strobe to achieve a correct exposure. In the macro position, we were able to focus down to 4 inches from the subject.

The biggest advantage to the Aquapix was its compact size and simplicity. With the flashes turned off, the red filter produced some amazing color images.

The small icons on the LCD screen are a bit difficult to see, but the rubber LCD hood kept the light off the screen. Not having f-stop or shutter-speed control took some getting used to, but we soon learned how to correct the exposure using the exposure compensation and the flash power settings. — *Jack & Sue Drafa*

OLYMPUS 5050/LIGHT & MOTION TETRA 5050 HOUSING

The Tetra 5050 is a rugged, compact housing for the five-megapixel Olympus 5050, which has a built-in zoom lens. Light &

Motion's accessory wide-angle lens vaults you into true wide-angle while retaining the convenience of zooming in or out.

The LCD monitor functions as the viewfinder. Adjust the brightness to one setting below normal to get the most accurate view underwater.

Light & Motion's Remote Optical Controller system provides automatic or manual control of the external strobe. Auto (best for macro) provides performance similar to TTL by firing a pre-flash for the camera to evaluate before the actual flash. Manual (best for wide-angle and normal photography) lets you dial in exactly the power you want in 12 incremental steps. ROC works in auto and manual with the full line of Sea & Sea strobes as well as the Ikelite DS-50 or DS-125. It also works with other Ikelite and Nikonos strobes in the manual mode. Don't forget to turn the ROC system on, or your strobe won't fire at all.

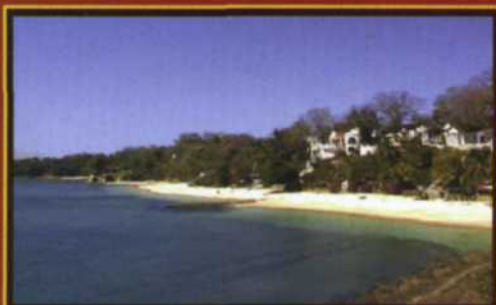
Shutter delay makes the 5050 best for slow-moving critters and reef panoramas. The recommended procedure is to press the shutter halfway to start the imaging process, then push it the rest of the way to take the picture. I found that one firm press and a steady hand worked, too. After some practice I got the hang of the timing and was even able to get some sharp images of free-swimming parrotfish.

Light & Motion is also working on a housing for the new Olympus 5060 camera. Unfortunately, it was not yet available when this test was conducted.

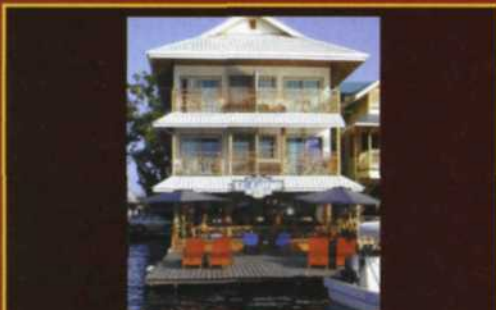
My tips for using the Tetra 5050: Go to All Reset in the camera's menu, and switch it to Off to keep the camera from reverting to its default settings every time you power down. To take best advantage of the Tetra 5050, I'd use it to photograph snorkelers in the shallows. Leave the strobe off, or use it manually to provide a little fill, and let that wide-angle lens capture some cool surface reflections. — *Bill Harrigan*

SEALIFE REEFMASTER DC250

The entire ReefMaster kit, including the camera, the housing, the accessory lenses and the external strobes, fits in a padded case smaller than most briefcases. The 2.1-megapixel camera features 8 MB of internal memory but also accepts SmartDisk media cards to greatly expand its capacity. The similar ReefMaster DC300 and DC310 units come with 3.3-megapixel cameras.



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I got the best results by staying right between five and six feet away. There is a significant delay before the strobe goes off, so hold the camera steady after you press the shutter.

The accessory macro lenses allow you to capture small subjects. The 16x macro lens focuses on an imaginary 4-by-5-inch frame located seven to 10 inches in front of the lens. Putting the subject just above the hole in the wand (with the wand extension retracted) will produce the sharpest image. The 8x macro lens is focused 10 to 13 inches from the lens and provides a 7-by-10-inch imaginary box in which to fit your subject. With this lens, place your subject two inches in from the tab hole in the end of the wand (with the wand extended this time) for the best results.

To get the best results with the ReefMaster, I'd head for clear water and stay five feet from my subject unless I was using the macro lenses. I'd try it topside, too, because the housed camera without the optional external strobes should make a nice all-weather rig. Take it out in the rain, rafting, snorkeling — anyplace wet or sloppy — and still come back with photos when everyone else has packed their fragile cameras away. — BH

CANON EOS DIGITAL REBEL/AQUATICA A300 HOUSING

The Aquatica A300 is a well-designed aluminum housing that is a nice match for Canon's Digital Rebel. The camera I tested came with a sharp 18-55 mm zoom lens that provided a useful range underwater. The only preparation required before installing the camera in the housing was to slide the zoom ring over the lens. The ring fit with friction, so no adjustment was necessary, and the camera settled onto the mounting tray without fuss. The camera and housing were frustration-free and quite nice.

The camera zoom control is generously sized and positioned perfectly under your left index finger. The A300 features an electronic shutter release, providing good control for depressing the shutter halfway to engage autofocus. The Digital Rebel is fast, providing virtually instantaneous response to the shutter release and no flash delay. The Technical Lighting Control arms supplied by Aquatica hold the strobes right where you want them and can be dismantled easily for hand holding.

The A300 could be a little awkward, which was mainly caused by the camera using the same dial to control both shutter speed and aperture when shooting in the manual mode. You have to screw in a skinny shaft on the back of the housing to switch functions, then screw it out again to switch back. It is not a problem if you're content to shoot in one of the priority modes or program for the entire dive.


The test unit was equipped with a bayonet-mount dome port that easily covered the 18-55 mm zoom and is wide

enough to give superb panoramas and over-unders with Canon's 16 mm fisheye lens. The dome shade/protector attaches with eight tiny Allen screws, but it did the job.

I'll bet the Aquatica A300 and Canon Digital Rebel would be a killer combination with a 100 mm macro lens and a pair of digital strobes. Set the camera on 1/60 at f-22, the ISO to 100 and the strobes on TTL, and let Canon's fast autofocus do its thing. Try this setup on a shallow reef at night, and you'll come back with 100 nice images on the card. — BH

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AQUATICA FUJI S2 PRO

Before this test in the Cayman Islands, we'd had a great deal of experience with the Fuji S2 Pro both topside and underwater. We love this high-end, 12-megapixel digital SLR camera. It takes all the Nikon lenses and is one of the few SLR cameras that has full TTL exposure control underwater. Several manufacturers make housings for the Fuji S2 Pro, but for this test we used the Aquatica S2 precision-cast-aluminum housing.

We found the camera pretty easy to

install in the housing after aligning the focus control so that it would engage properly with the camera. The backplate of the housing is held in place with two latches that have safety clips to prevent accidental opening. The twin-sync port allowed us to use a twin-flash setup, which is often necessary when you want to shoot super-wide-angle images. The two ergonomic handles on the sides of the housing held the two flash units in place, making the system very comfortable to work with both above and below water.

One feature we really liked was the bayonet port mount on the front of the housing. To change lenses, we twisted off the port and, using the release button on the side of the housing, easily removed the lens through the front opening. The camera controls were also easily manipulated with the micro buttons that carefully aligned with each control. We also liked the extra viewing port on top of the housing that displayed the information on the top of the camera.

The dual-memory card port can be opened and the cards changed without removing the camera from the housing — an added bonus. But you still have to remove the camera from the base plate to change the batteries.

We were most impressed with the bright viewfinder image that projected through the optical glass viewfinder in the back of the housing. It made it easy to view images underwater. We found the two Ikelite 125 strobes to be very fast and reliable, and they easily outlasted us on a dive. — Jack & Sue Drafhahl

NIKON D100 IN IKELITE HOUSING

This is one of the most compact Ikelite SLR housings we have seen yet. With the twin strobe handles and all the features of Nikon's electronic marvel, this Ikelite housing is a dream to use. The camera is easy to access with three strong latches that keep this great Nikon camera dry. The magnified image on the back of the housing made it easy to frame and focus images in both bright and dark waters, and the menu controls are easy to find and use.

One of the best features is that you can change both the battery and the memory card without removing the camera from the base plate. This allowed us to quickly change cards between dives. Plus, the camera battery charged quickly and easily lasted through the dive.

We were also impressed that we could use our 28, 20 and 14 mm lenses all inside one port and still produce sharp images without the use of diopters for correction. We were even able to remove the lens through the front port using the lens release control on the housing without having to remove the camera.

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cord. We found that the Ikelite 125 strobes charged quickly between dives and furnished the necessary power we demanded. Our biggest problem was that we liked this combination of camera, housing and flash so well that we had trouble moving on to conduct other tests.
— Jack & Sue Drafa

SEA & SEA DX-3000

The DX-3000 is one of the first point-and-shoot cameras we purchased for personal use a couple of years ago. This three-plus megapixel camera and housing use the same bayonet mount that takes the MX-10 camera's 20 mm wide-angle lens, macro framer and close-focus fisheye lens. Altogether these components make this an inexpensive camera option that can do almost everything.

Setup for a dive is easy with the DX-3000. Simply open the hinged backplate, drop in the Ricoh camera, load the two AA batteries, insert the SmartDisk Memory card, check the blue O-ring surface, secure the back with a latch-lock system and away you go. We like this system because it is very compact and easy to use. On previous trips we would even keep one of these cameras in our BC and pull it out when we had finished using our pro system.

Shooting with the DX-3000 is a little different from many of the point-and-shoot systems we have used, as there are no f-stop or shutter-speed controls. We quickly learned to control the available light exposure with the exposure compensation control and to adjust the foreground exposure with the power settings on the DX-25 strobe. When we wanted to shoot fish or smaller critters, we found it better to try the zoom first, as it had almost no shutter delay. If we needed to get even closer, then we switched to the close-up mode, even though there was a longer shutter delay.

For our tests we put the camera's diffuser down so that it blocked the direct flash and tripped the DX-25 flash. This flash connects with a fiber-optic cable, so you don't have to worry about a sync cord flooding. This unique Sea & Sea flash has a special control for several types of preflash systems. We experimented with a couple of settings to get the best combination and found that setting No. 1 was best.

The camera comes with a rubber



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light hood to provide better underwater viewing of the LCD panel. The compactness of this camera makes it an excellent candidate for both underwater photography and other water-sports activities like river rafting. — *Jack & Sue Drafa*

IKELITE OLYMPUS 5060

The number of controls on the Olympus 5060 5.1-megapixel camera is almost overwhelming. The good news is that once you learn them all, you will have more control over your underwater

images than you ever dreamed.

Ikelite's compact housing for this camera does an excellent job, considering the number of controls that have to be aligned. One big advantage of this housing is that it is clear, so you can easily locate all the controls.

Two controls on the side of the camera can be difficult to use at first since both must be pressed at the same time while rotating the control dial to compensate for flash exposure. Ikelite gives you a special pull-to-position control to

depress these buttons, and it gets easier to use with practice.

We found the camera itself incredible: It allows you to zoom in to photograph fish, take wide-angle images, macro and even supermacro, all by just changing a few controls and hardware.

The camera is designed with a hot shoe for TTL operation. Ikelite uses a special sync system that enables the Ikelite strobe to fire a pre-flash and then a main flash to achieve TTL. Seeing the flash fire twice for each shot is a little unnerving at first, but it really works. These compact flash units could easily shoot more than 100 shots (200 with pre-flash) and never hesitate on a recycle.

This is the first time we have used an Ikelite housing that has a threaded port. Because this port can take the new super-wide Olympus lens without attaching it directly to the camera, between dives we could remove the camera and change batteries and cards without having to remove the large wide-angle lens.

The Ikelite base plate had one handle mounted on the left side. With a finger on the trigger and one hand on the left handle, we found it difficult to use when in surge. We suggest a twin-handle system so you can hold the camera and fire the shutter with one hand.

— *Jack & Sue Drafa*

OLYMPUS 5060

This is one of our favorite midrange point and shoot cameras. Olympus has done a great job as the housing is extremely well made with all controls on the camera supported by controls on the housing. We were most impressed with the double O-ring construction of all the surfaces accessed by the user. Even with the multitude of controls on the back of the housing, we found it easy to move around using the multilevel controls to quickly find just the right feature. We used the new Ultralight digital tray and handle. It was comfortable and worked great to maintain the compact feel of this system.

For all our underwater tests, we used the camera's internal flash. The camera and housing do support TTL with the Olympus FL-20 flash and sync cord; however, we could not get it to work. The problem was not the system but the fact that we had missed a menu function on the camera that linked the two together. Post-trip testing of the two proved that



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the TTL flash would have worked great.
Oh, well ... next time.

A unique aspect of this housing is the lens-port system. It uses two twist locks that force the port against the double O-ring in the housing. On a previous dive trip, we were able to remove the standard port and replace it with the superwide port and lens. This gave us the ability to shoot some great wide images while enjoying the benefits of shooting with a compact camera and housing system. The downside to this wide angle system is that you must remove both the lens and the camera to change the batteries and the memory card.

We found the hood on the back of the housing very useful as its long slanted shell blocked out the extraneous light but still gave us a clear view of the LCD screen. Most amazing are the half-dozen combinations of white balance controls that give more control over color balance than most systems we have seen underwater.

Another nice feature of the camera is its dual memory-card slot. This allowed us to shoot either the Compact Flash or xD card just by pressing a button. Since the camera shoots both high-resolution still images and 640x480 30 frames-per-second video, you can easily shoot video on one card and stills on the other.

— Jack & Sue Drafaahl

NIKON D100/LIGHT & MOTION TITAN HOUSING

The Titan is a solidly constructed aluminum housing with bayonet mount ports, a slide-in camera tray, cam-locking latches and double O-ring seals on the backplate. First impression: If all the buttons on those high-tech handles work, this is going to be slick.

The Smart Grips are indeed slick, with thumb buttons that let you control aperture, shutter speed, strobe power (independently or combined for two strobes) and autofocus. You can keep your eye on the viewfinder, thumb in the settings you want and shoot. The ROC system can be programmed in a few seconds to control most Ikelite, Sea & Sea and Nikonos strobes in 12 steps of incremental power. Left and right strobes can be programmed and controlled independently so you can mix and match.

The shutter-release lever on the Titan is one of the best I've encountered — positioned just right for my index fin-

ger and providing an excellent feel. Couple that with the D100's no-delay shutter release, and you're ready to rock and roll.

To test the flat port, I made a night dive with a 60 mm macro lens, and an Ikelite 200 as the main strobe and an Ikelite DS-125 as the secondary. It was easy to check the results on the LCD, and the ROC system gave me complete control to make quick adjustments. I used the 8-inch dome port, which fits a variety of Nikon wide-angle and zoom lenses, on several reef and wall dives. The 16 mm lens produced good results with this port, although the 1.5x lens image-coverage factor of the D100 noticeably cut down the angle of view. Nikon does, however, make a fisheye 10.5 mm lens, and I'd love to try the Titan again with Nikon's made-for-digital 12-24 mm zoom and a pair of Ikelite DS-125s or Sea & Sea YS-120s. — BH

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