

Sea & Sea VX-1000

Digital Video Goes Underwater!

by Jack and Sue Drafaahl

As we near the end of the millennium it seems digital data is becoming the norm. There are digital telephones, digital music, digital cameras, digital watches and digital video. That's OK because digital data makes communication easier and faster. While video has been around for a while, digital video is a newcomer. And, because it offers crisp image color and technological advances, it was only a matter of time before the digital video camera plunged into the deep blue.

Sea & Sea Products, Ltd., has created a sophisticated housing-the VX-1000 Pro-for Sony's top of the line digital camcorder, the DCR-VX1000. This housing not only makes underwater videography easier but produces high quality images. And, it uses a combination of mechanical and electronic controls to maintain the creative flexibility of the camera.

The Sea & Sea VX-1000 Pro is constructed of corrosion resistant aluminum with a metallic finish. It is neutral in the water for easy handling. The halves of the housing are held together with four catch and strike clamps that incorporate a safety latch to prevent accidental opening. To open the housing, first set it face down on a flat surface that will not damage or scratch the exterior. Push down on the safety latches and release two opposite latches simultaneously. Then open the other two the same way. It is important not to open one latch at a time.

Before inserting the camera in the housing, attach the special baseplate. As you start to slide the camera into the housing, attach the sound mini jack to the front of the camera. This cord connects the microphone on the front of the housing so you can record underwater sounds. After the camera is securely in place, attach the remote control cord to the back of the camera with a second mini plug.

The VX-1000 has a special optical viewer built into the back half of the housing. The removable part of the eyepiece on the Sony camera is detached and stored in a safe place. A spacer is inserted so the remaining part of the viewer angles up about 30 to 40 degrees to align with the viewing system on the back of the housing.

Before closing the housing, check all the functions on the camera. This is not difficult and becomes almost automatic after you've

done it a couple of times. As with any underwater housing, check to make sure the blue O-ring is clean, seated properly and that no cords are being pinched between the housing halves. The housing back half is secured in the same manner it was opened, by simultaneously closing two opposite latches. Check all the housing controls one more time to make sure they all work.

The creative aspect of the VX-1000 Pro comes from the controls on its sides. On the right handle, there is the recording start/stop button, zoom button and record LED. The left handle provides control of manual focus, autofocus and image brightness. The remaining controls are on the back of the housing. These include program AE, white balance button, one-touch white balance, internal illumination, shutter speed control and the auto lock/hold switching dial. That's quite a few controls, but most adjustments are set once and not changed during the dive.

Sea & Sea has added a few special features that make the VX-1000 Pro even better. Any moisture entering the housing will be indicated by a yellow LED flashing in the viewfinder. The top of the housing has a heavy duty carrying handle.

A port on the top of the right handle allows the connection of the optional external monitor that fits on the top of the housing. The VMC-50/V housing for Casio's VM-50 video monitor comes in handy for situations when you can't always have your eye focused on the internal viewer. An optional wide angle conversion kit includes a dome port and wide conversion lens that can be attached to the front of the camera/housing, providing 88 degree diagonal coverage. Sea & Sea also offers U/W video lights and arms.

Technology is changing from day to day. It is really hard to stay ahead of it all. It is nice to see that Sea & Sea has helped take digital to the depths of the sea (or at least to 200 feet) with its VX-1000 Pro housing. And since Sea & Sea is now a Sony dealer, you can buy both camera and housing at the same time.

The Sony DCR-VX1000 camera retails for \$4,199; the VX-1000 Pro housing is \$3,995.

For more information, contact Sea & Sea Underwater Photography USA at 1938 Kellogg Avenue, Carlsbad, CA 92008, (760) 929-1909.