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Photo & Videography



Model Photography

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Incredible as it may sound, one of the most difficult creatures to shoot under water is a human being. That is, if your goal is to integrate a diver in the underwater environment as a natural, harmonious element. Let's look at some of the more important factors in achieving a great diver portrait.

Photographing models

The description "model" applies to anyone human in front of a camera young or old, male or female, petite or large. In a underwater environment, for which we're less than adequately adapted, we are at an instant disadvantage compared to the grace and splendour of its natural inhabitants, but looks aren't always everything.

So, we are big, blubbery bulks of neoprene and steel, ungracefully suspended in a medium we weren't made for. That doesn't

mean we couldn't be pictured in an attractive way. Remember: Photography is a more objective form of complete deception.

Being fit and in control of your movements and buoyancy is a good start, and serious divers usually are. However, one aspect often gets overlooked: our model's equipment. Long and narrow fins enhance the outline of the body and make your model look more dynamic as well as slimmer. Single bladder BCs or wings don't add bulk and make the diver look even less stocky.

To enhance your model's visibility and colour definition, avoid dark colours, especially for the suit. "Professional black" only has its place behind the camera, unless you actually intend to depict your buddy Fred as a resident black hole in a galaxy of colour. Whether the model has to be dressed colourful as a butterfly or go with colour coordinated pastel shades is a choice left to

Communing with nature: In this picture, the model's placement behind a school of fish makes her look like part of it

Models make a photograph come alive when their position and focus compliment the architecture of an underwater setting

the photographer's taste and intent—as long as it's not dark. The colours yellow, grey, pink and neon green are best suited because of their high contrast to the surrounding water.

Special attention should also be paid to equipping your model for the dive.

Let's keep everything tight and neat. Old types of BCs like the "horse collar" aka "the rubber toilet seat" variety should be avoided because of their loose webbing and lots of stuff that dangles. Tuck things away neatly but keep safety and functionality under emergency conditions in mind.

Posing

Much as it may sound like what supermodels do for a living, *posing* is the best way to describe what all kinds of models do in front of all kinds of photographic gear. An absolute prerequisite for success in the field of underwater modelling is communication between photographer and subject. That is before the dive, not 25m down. Efficient work is

possible only if everyone involved (this can include several models and camera assistants) are perfectly clear about absolutely all the conditions of the shoot. Once under water, any attempts at art direction and communication of complex instructions are likely to be a complete waste of time, air and nerves. The likely result is chaos.

Good briefings, especially during the early days of collaboration with a new model, facilitate experience and understanding and ultimately lead to perfect team work. If your model knows your intentions and gesticulations, delays will be at a minimum. A school of fish can easily get centered between model and photographer, or your partner may assume a perfect position at the right distance to camera, or other elements of the shoot can occur, which need signaling.

Mastering buoyancy to perfection and swimming effortlessly against a slight current, the model should be able to remain in position as long as the photographer





photography



takes to complete a series. Holding on to coral or bearing down on them is completely “verboten”. Both partners need to be conscious of the environment and act accordingly.

And naturally, as in general photography, the model should never look straight at the lens and assume a natural, plausible posture. Point a flashlight or draw the on-lookers attention to the main subject element by clearly looking at it, head posture and all.

Technical aspects

Model photography uses all kinds of lenses at all distances. The trick is to know what to use for which effect. Half body portraits are best shot using 35mm and 28mm focal lengths. The optical distortions resulting from shorter lenses, the super wide angles, would too severely disfigure the human silhouette.

At short range it is advisable to combine this with the use of a flash diffuser - usually a white plastic cap you put over your flash's reflector to soften the lighting. Diffusers do cut light energy but at short distances it not anything to worry about.

If your aim is to picture the diver in total

Placing the model between you and the light source creates a silhouette effect

Models should draw the viewer's eye to the main subject of a photograph by directing their eyes and streamlining their body towards that subject

or integrate your buddy into a landscape shot, the focal length applied cannot be short enough. Angles between 90° and 180° drastically reduces the distance to subject and consequently the diffusion and absorption of flash light. The result is a clearer, better-defined and sharper picture with improved colour definition. To avoid chalky skin tones it is advisable to minimise flash application and use a strobe yielding a colour temperature around 5100° Kelvin.

Vacancy for Aquaman and Mermaid

Professional underwater photography poses even greater challenges to the model as this genre is dominated by reportage style where a series of pic-



tures tells a story. This approach requires a model who can double as camera assistant and is competent in handling the equipment. What you're looking for is a photogenic ace diver with a knack for gadgets and considerable carrying capacity. In other words, an advanced aquatic human being capable of hooking up vast arrays of cable and slave strobes, comfortable with multi-dive profiles on air, Nitrox and Trimix and perfectly focused on the intended outcome of your artistic ambition. (Yep, I'm getting carried away!)

But to be more realistic... It helps if your model enjoys diving and is a com-

petent diver. Photographic experience is an added bonus because the model understands the photographer's intent and needs better. The model who is also a photographer will make sure their eyes are in the same focal plane as that lion fish, keep perfect diagonals in mind as they swim into the frame or point a light, and are generally more patient—unless they, too, carry a camera.

Experienced models will go one step further, alerting the photographer to a flash gun pointing away from the subject, signal in case of flash failure, or remind you to remove the lens cover from that venerable Nikonos V.

Model tips

- 1 Talking the language of photography; Any person in front of a camera is a model! Depending on the situation and the planned pictures, the photographer decides if a female or male fits better in it.
- 2 A model has to be your regular buddy, or a resort dive master, who does this kind of stuff all the time. Never count on getting good results from asking some random diver on the dive boat to play the model for a few minutes.
- 3 The model should match the under-





photography



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: Have the model look at the subject



water environment. Modern diving gear can look quite aesthetic if you shorten straps and tuck the hoses and other dangling items away, so the model doesn't look like an "octopus".

- 4 Most of the time, the model swims behind the main subject, and therefore, it is less illuminated by the strobe. If dressed in a black or dark blue wetsuit, the model will disappear in back as a flat object with low contrast. Use bright suits, the best colours are yellow and silver!
- 5 Good diving skills are a prerequisite for both the photographer and the model! Classical diving procedures must be routine and second nature. If there are too many distractions, it ruins the focus and the results will come out accordingly.
- 6 When working with a model or being a model, never forget to be safe. The same rules apply as with any other dive. In many occasions, the model and pho-

tographer will be quite far away from each other and perhaps paying attention to a situation full of action—for example, becoming encircled by a large school of jacks or penetrating a wreck from the side. In all these cases, time, air, depth, currents, distance from the boat and other important facts should be observed.

- 7 The photographers "etiquette" in regard to environment must also be reflected in the behaviour of his or her model. A good model is able to hover above the reef, not pump in it, and respect the animals by not touching, chasing and feeding them.
- 8 A photographer's saying goes: "A good briefing with the model is half the picture!" Underwater, it becomes even more important. Due to the fact that we can't talk matters through down there, everything has to be discussed beforehand. During the dive, a good way to make the model understand what the photographer has in mind is by demon-

strating it, for example swimming along the stern of a wreck, stopping at a particular point and aiming the beam of the torch to a soft coral. The model observes the demonstration from the position the photographer will shoot from.

- 9 Same rule as on land: Models should never look or stare into the camera, except a person in a picture who has to be recognized for some reason. The model must act in a natural way—looking at the main subject, for example a fish. If the model points the beam of a torch or the slave strobe somewhere, the eyes have to be aimed at the same direction.
- 10 The more the model knows about underwater photography, the easier the work becomes and the better the pictures that result. Send your model to a photo workshop to learn the basics. (Your model will surely appreciate it.) Also always discuss the pictures together—perhaps during a nice dinner in an exclusive restaurant. ■

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UW Exhibit in Eilat

This past October in Israel, award winning underwater photographer, Noam Kortler, exhibited 40 underwater photographs... under water. Displaying color images of sea life printed with the new NUR Tempo Q printer and mounted on PVC boards, Kortler brought a new twist to the traditional underwater photography gallery and raised awareness for the ocean at the same time.

Prior to being submerged under the waves, the images were placed on display on Bar Beach, Eilat, where the mayor of the town officially opened the exhibition. Ten percent of the sales from the event went to cancer research.

Kortler has worked as a professional underwater photographer for eight years and has won several prizes during that time including first prize in the Macro category at the Chicago show, Our World Under Water in 2007 and 2006. He also won first prize in the Best Five Images at the SanDisk Red Sea competition and first prize in the Man and the Sea category of the California show, Under the Blue.

Kortler also owns Nemo Divers in Eilat, and has operated a diving school there for the last 11 years. He is a professional PADI instructor. ■

THIS PAGE: Scenes from Kortler's underwater photography exhibit underwater in Eilat



DivePhotoGuide Wins Web Award for UW Photo & Video

One of the great things about the web is the combination of diversity and relevance that websites represent to those who read them. Interested in wreck diving? Underwater photography or video? Cold water diving? The web offers each niche its own rightful place in the world and brings like-minded people together around specific content and tools like never before. To drive this point home, a search for "scuba diving" on Google returns over 2.4 million web pages, and just "wreck diving" brings back 324,000 web pages.

In the US, we share a common language, and there are a handful of large diving related websites competing for different niches in a really big market. In Europe and other parts of the world, several large websites have started to dominate the more fragmented markets in different languages. Our international audience knows this well. Two of the largest diving websites in Europe have collaborated to launch "The Best Scuba Web Awards". Scubaportal.net, which operates both an Italian and English version, and Plongeur.com, a French language website, developed these awards to recognize excellence in various website categories.

DivePhotoGuide is honored to have received the award for Best UW Video & Photo website. We also congratulate the winners of all the other categories and the organizers for putting on a great award program. ■





Fantasea FS-500

Features on the Nikon FS-500 camera housing include controls for the following features: exposure compensation, flash, self-timer, macro, anti-shake, one-touch portrait, and D-lighting.
www.fantasea.com



Flashy

At DEMA Seacam displayed a prototype of their new Sea Flash 150 strobe, a compact version of the previous 250 model. Harald Hordosch showed us the flexible power settings, and removable battery, and explained that we should expect it to perform as a powerful, high quality, compact strobe.
www.seacam.com



Ike's D300

Ikelite had a lot to show on DEMA. Housings for the Canon 40D, and the new Olympus E-410 & E-510 are available now, and apparently they're working on a housing for the Olympus E-3 and the Nikon D300. Historically Ikelite has been great at developing affordable housings for all the new camera models quickly after the models hit the street. Ikelite also had a new strobe on display, the Autoflash AF35 System.
www.ikelite.com



Sonoran

All functions are infrared controlled, only "on/off" is operated by a double O-ring consolidated mechanism. The housing offers a direct and shaded view onto the open camera monitor. The housing has two stainless steel clamps and heightened inner housing borders for accurate guidance of both halves of the housing as well as a flatport with M67-thread to take WW- or macro-lens.
www.bskinetics.com



Need TLC?

The new TLC underwater Bouyancy Compensation Floats from Aquatica are made of non corrosive light weight material they are supplied with a 1" TLC ball for mounting to either a housing or strobe arm allowing the photographer to perfectly trim the balance of his or her housing.
www.aquatica.ca



Remote control

This remote is compact, economical and most important does not require any modification of the Aquatica housing. It can be used with most Nikon and Canon camera having an electronic cable release socket. The Trigger assembly is made of anodized aluminum and is connected to the housing via a standard strobe cable that can be lengthened by adding an extension cord.
www.aquatica.ca



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Seal Check

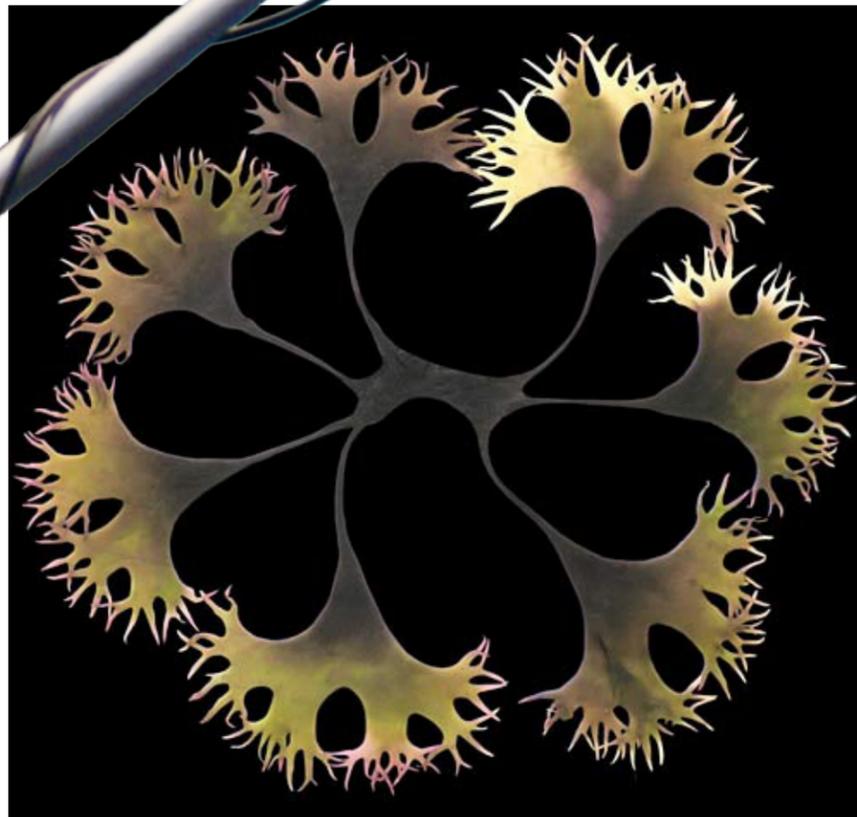
Gates Underwater Products, introduces Seal Check, a new testing product that allows Gates customers to confirm housing integrity prior to water submersion. In the real world housing leaks occur. Damaged o-rings, rushed setup, and unfamiliarity with equipment are the top 3 reasons for leaks and floods. Until now, moisture alarms were the only line of defense against water intrusion, often sounding the warning too late. Seal Check is like a water alarm that goes off before entering the water.



Seacam shows off

In Antibes, Seacam introduced a fantastic pole-cam package, complete with an electronic eyepiece adapter that feeds into a remote monitor and/or monitor glasses.

The monitor glasses seem to be branded versions of the popular video glasses used to watch dvd's and ipod videos – and they're pretty cool! The remote monitor is the hub of the system, connecting to the pole bulkhead and providing the signal to the glasses. Lastly, Seacam has released a new tripod and monopod.



Andrea Ottesen of the University of Maryland's Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture shared a first place prize in the photography category of the 2007 International Science and Engineering Visualization Challenge for the natural light photo. Seen here is Irish moss—*Chondrus crispus*—a common Atlantic red alga that is routinely harvested for its carrageenan. The chemical is used as a thickener in many processed foods. The awards are given out each year by the National Science Foundation and the journal Science for the imagery that best conveys complex scientific information and concepts.

Tips and Tricks

Split Photography

Split photography is a technique that allows combining an underwater view and an above-water view in one shot.

Although this technique is one of the most challenging, it is also favoured by many underwater photographers. You'll need a housed camera with a wide-angle lens and a dome port.

It also requires certain good weather and water conditions and some photographic skills. Good results are largely dependent on whether the water is still and transparent enough and lighting is natural. You can't keep the camera still in wave action.

A fish-eye lens has a very large depth of field! If you shoot at f8 or less, both an underwater and above-water parts can be in focus simultaneously. It is recommended that you use the bigger spherical ports, if you can afford them, as the simultaneous focus of the above and underwater parts of the image is easier.

Focus on the underwater part. It is usually the most important part in the composition, while the above-water view, which usually is the background, can stay a little blurred.

Keep in mind that wide-angle and fish-eye lenses always will distort the image to some degree. This is most apparent in compositions involving straight vertical and horizontal lines above surface. Underwater there are less known references.

To avoid visible drops on the port, some photographers use a tiny amount of detergent to remove any surface tension and prevent drops from clinging on.

