

Y-START

WITH A

YS-01 STROBE?

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> THIS MINI GEM CERTAINLY PACKS A PUNCH WITH LIGHTING AND FEATURES. AT ALMOST HALF THE PRICE* AND SIZE OF MOST REPUTABLE STROBES, THE YS-01 IS A WORTHY PICTURE-PERFECT ADDITION FOR ANY UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER LOOKING FOR STROBES FOR BOTH MACRO AND (TO MY SURPRISE!) VERY WIDE ANGLE UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY TOO.

Wide angle photos require both power and lighting angle coverage so I was sceptical when this palm-sized surprise popped into my hands. Armed with a pair of these twinkling twins and my wet wide angle lens, I decided to really put them to the test. Thanks to AquaMaster, my local Sea&Sea distributor, over several trips I tried them out in the shallows, at depth, in darkness and in good to bad visibility. Without a doubt, these tiny powerhouses proved impressive on size, weight,

intensity, angle of coverage, battery consumption, and recycle time.

In the Water

For my wide angle setup I insist on a 'wet' wide lens with my compact housing. This not only widens my camera's angle of view but more importantly, it also reduces the subject-to-lens and strobe-to-lens distance giving clearer photos since there are less particles in front of the subject – perfect for less than great visibility. My wide lens setup in particular gives a viewing angle of almost 135 degrees

which means I can frame my modeling diver one metre away from top to fin... so let's light her up too!

With this compact and versatile setup, I ventured first to the eastern Chumphorn Pinnacles of Thailand which graced my dives with 30+ metre visibility! The topography included steep bulging walls of coral, masses of schooling fish, giant harp corals and macro-wide-angle shots which require both close-up subjects and far away backgrounds to be lit up. Photographically challenging, but with the 110°x110° coverage (with diffuser) and GN (guide number) 20 for intensity – similar to the 110-alpha's 105°x105° + GN22 - all these shots proved easy photo picks for the YS-01... and great pics for my collection!

Next up was the other extreme with 5-10 metre visibility in Coron's famous World War II shipwreck graveyard. Here silt dominates and daily tidal currents winding through dozens of islands dares underwater shooters to strobe their photographic memoirs. With my almost metre-long strobe arms, I position my twin YS-01s as far behind my lens and as far apart above my hood as possible to avoid the dreaded underwater snow storm syndrome called backscatter! In such low vis I had low expectations, but as the brief review of shots lit my LCD screen, to my amazement I saw vibrant images, one after another. And with my strobes' consistent reach of several metres in front of me, I was shooting up wartime guns and superstructures like an M16 rifle on auto pilot!

So after the success of strobing my wide shots I had no doubts on the macro scale since it is less demanding on light intensity – sure enough, my twin YS-01s proved me right. With even lighting from the included diffusers and a recycle time fast enough to keep up with my camera's 1-second-per-

BEST OF ALL, WITH THE REPUTATION OF SEA&SEA STROBES, EVEN WIDE ANGLE LIGHTING AND AVOIDING STRONG STROBE SHADOWS ON SUBJECTS ARE NOW MORE AFFORDABLE. TWO OF THESE TINY STROBES CAN COST ABOUT THE SAME AS ONE LARGE STROBE...

frame continuous shooting, these strobes delivered half power flashes triggered by its on-board flash that outlasted my camera's limit of 20 continuous shots.

Then even at one notch down from full power flash dumps, they managed to pump out accurate lighting every two seconds on continuous shooting. Full power though proved too much, but then if they could keep up, these babies would probably be double the size/price and re-named from

YS-01 to 110-juniors! And with almost comparable performance as the 110alpha strobes, I really didn't miss the extra weight and bulk underwater AND while traveling.

Best of all, with the reputation of Sea&Sea strobes, even wide angle lighting and avoiding strong strobe shadows on subjects are now more affordable for everyone... practically a revolution for underwater hobbyist shooters!

Fabulous Features

Nowadays, a hard-to-find feature for mini sized strobes is a built-in LED target light but the ones on my YS-01's were good enough to substitute my night dive torch. Great! One less piece of gear to charge, carry and worry over! And not only is it a high-end LED (as opposed to the cheapo LEDs that costs pennies to produce) but it

gives out a good even 1 watt beam which I found I could use even for casual night dive video recording and photos! Bonus! And of course they work great as target lights too. I even managed a one hour plus dive while strobing my photos!

Now if you're not the night type scuba adventurer, the YS-02 is technically identical to the YS-01 minus the LED light, DS-TTL and 5 grams! This shaves the price down about US\$100*, but I find the LED a good replacement for my dive torch which I use night and day to see the real colour of my subject before its paparazzi appearance.

As Sea&Sea's entrance to mini strobe range they've done a superb job, but may like to consider a few possible minor improvements. For gloved divers, the intensity dial might prove tricky, especially

Left: Cathedral cave is hidden on Coron Island, Philippines. An entrance through a shallow underwater tunnel leads to stalactites above ground and stalagmites underwater with an opening to the outside above. Shot with: Canon G10 in Patima Housing. INON UWL-100+dome. Dual SEA&SEA YS-01 strobes.

Right: One of the few warship guns found on one of over a dozen Coron's World War II wrecks. They don't fire rounds anymore but are still great to shot for underwater photographers. Shot with: Canon G10 in Patima Housing. INON UWL-100+dome. Dual SEA&SEA YS-01 strobes.



THE YS-01 STROBE



A saw blade shrimp hides behind the stem of coral whips to avoid predators. Chumphon, Thailand. Shot with: SEA&SEA DX-2G. INON UWL-100+dome. Dual SEA&SEA YS-01 strobes.

for feeling the increment clicks/changes. Next to it, I sometimes moved the power switch position accidentally de-synchronizing it from my camera's flash and likewise with strobe ignition/firing, I also got some missed firings on occasions. However, the SLEEP function on the target light which automatically switches it off after 30 minutes is a real battery saver for the light insensitive types.

Another great idea is the dual sync cord optical ports; one for triggering and one to trigger a slave strobe. It certainly made shooting any combination of strobes - be it the same brand or otherwise - a breeze to set up. Kudos to Sea&Sea for saving me hours of fiddling with tape, zap-straps and bungy cords to get strobes to fire together...especially if I decide a shot needs 3 or 4 strobes - attention cave photographers! Now if only they came with an external optical port magnifier (as opposed to an indented port) so we could do away with the slave sync wire altogether!

Overall Stars

For a strobe to be almost half the size, weight and price as most currently marketed strobes and still pump out comparable lighting with very decent recycle times and build, these strobes I'm sure are slated for stardom. And in these go-go gadget times where we're becoming conditioned to 'paying more for less', it seems that with the YS-01s you'll be 'paying less for more'!

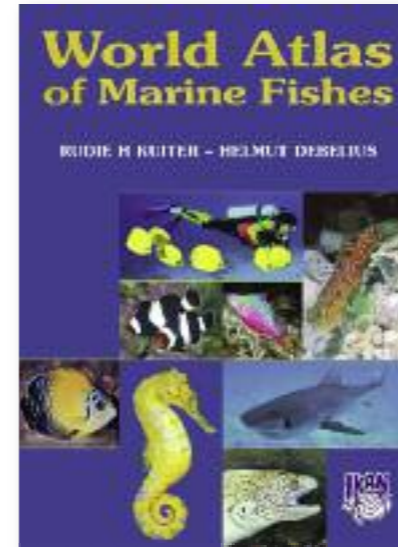
Links

Official Sea&Sea website: www.seaandsea.jp
To find your local distributor visit: www.seaandsea.jp/distributor



Lawrence Alex Wu is an underwater photographer and scuba instructor based in SE Asia. Teaching since 1996, he dived into 'underwater' photography with the digital camera revolution in 2003 and hasn't come up for air since. With over a dozen international underwater photographic awards since 2005, all his underwater work has been with only digital compacts and he now teaches other divers the techniques of scuba photography with compact cameras. www.aguapictures.com

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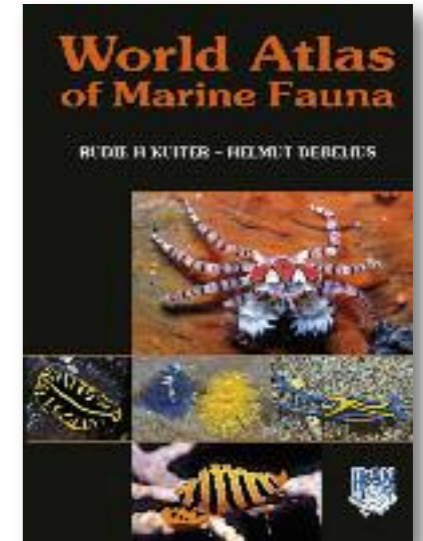
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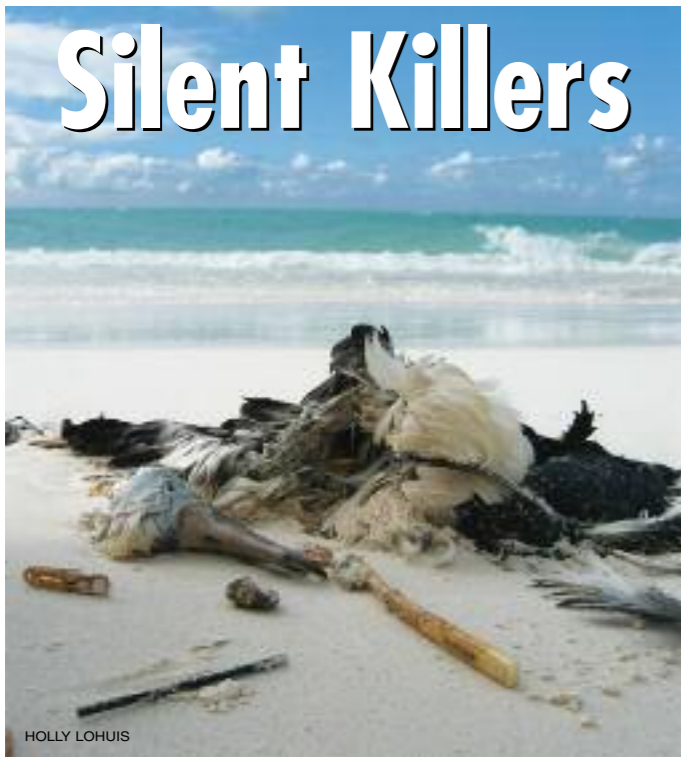
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Silent Killers



The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands is one of the most remote places on Earth and largely uninhabited. Here, thousands of miles from any continent, an incredible array of all the deadly tokens of human manufacturing capabilities was discovered and recorded in 2003.

Due to an ocean gyre that sweeps across the Pacific along a path that leads to these islands, millions of toothbrushes, children's toys, cigarette lighters, glass bottles, golf balls, rubber items, and even whole computer monitors wash ashore. Many of these items, such as plastic that becomes encrusted with fish eggs, are swallowed by albatross adults seeking food for their fledglings. This deadly combination is then regurgitated into the hungry mouths of their young. The young birds simply cannot digest plastic materials and the accumulation over the first six months of their lives is deadly.

Jean-Michel Cousteau's report and some astounding images are on www.oceanfutures.org



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