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*New Product
Series*

U/W HOUSING

IKELITE'S HOUSING FOR THE JVC GR-AX7:

Autofocus Above
And Below The
Water—With
The U/W
Wide
Angle
Lens In
Place!



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



The unusual and remarkable functions of the JVC GR-AX7 camera, combined with Ikelite's ability to accommodate them, are what make this combination such a great U/W video system!

Normally when we review a video housing system, we try to stay as objective as possible. Ikelite's newest housing for the JVC GR-AX7 camera made that difficult. This combination is so likable you'll do back flips just to get it U/W.

One of the biggest problems plaguing underwater videographers has been the size and weight of the camera housings. Ikelite, a leading manufacturer of these cases, has always made every attempt to design high quality, durable and compact video housings. With the new aluminum JVC, Ikelite has initiated a wrap-around concept. When the camera is inserted in the housing, there is less than a finger's width of space between the camera and housing. This compactness allows the camera controls to operate freely, yet keeps the combined weight of the camera/housing to 12 pounds in air. The housing is no larger than a standard 35mm SLR housing and, it's easier to use.

HOUSING CONFIGURATION

The aluminum housing is in two pieces, the main body and the backplate. The outside of each is painted white; the inside is a flat, non-reflective black. The two halves are sealed with a large O-ring and held in place with two spring loaded clamps.

The front of the housing is threaded for the optical dome port that corrects for distortion and holds the wide angle lens for underwater photography. The port has an extension that serves as a lens hood and a stand to set the housing on when opening and closing it. A much smaller flat port next to the dome port serves as a window to let light pass through and strike the camera's white balance control.

Two black handles are attached to the base of the housing, allowing the videographer to move freely. The handles are configured to accept the Ikelite Modular Video-Light 45.

There are two control knobs on the top center of the housing. The front control turns the camera on, while the second control allows you to switch from auto to manual focus and back again. The zoom control is on the right center of the housing and allows you to zoom the camera lens out to 6X power. Next to the right housing handle you will find the start/stop camera control. When you press the control down the camera starts recording. When you press the lever again, the camera goes into standby mode.

A most unique control is found on the front of the housing. Turning this control counterclockwise will flip the color correction filter into the image path. This reddish filter compensates for the blue cast that dominates underwater. When you surface with the housing, you can turn the knob clockwise and remove the filter. The process is so smooth you can swing the housing out of the water and remove the filter all at the same time, giving perfectly balanced U/W to topside transitions.

This is one of very few camera systems that can autofocus above water with the U/W wide angle lens in place.

THE CAMERA IS THE KEY

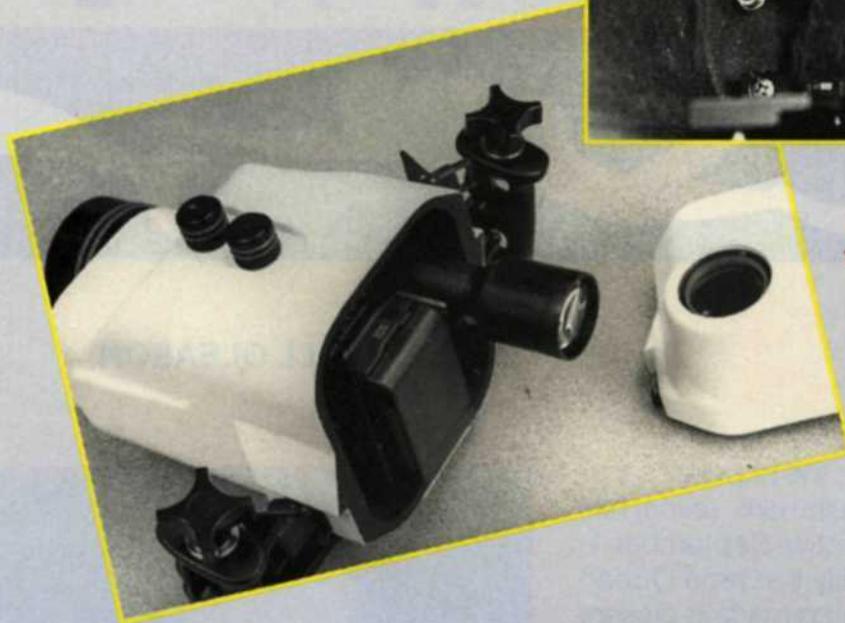
We would be doing an injustice to the JVC camera if we were to say the Ikelite housing is the most important component of this system. The unusual functions of the camera and Ikelite's ability to accommodate them are what makes this system so good. First, Ikelite has made a Video-Eye that replaces the standard camera viewfinder. This magnifies the images, allowing the underwater videographer to see a full frame, bright image from facemask distance.

The camera's most remarkable function is continuous focus from wide angle

to extreme macro. Not only can the camera and housing focus throughout the entire range, but it does it with such speed that everything looks in focus. You can literally pan from a tubeworm to a Whale Shark in less than one second and both will be in focus.

We were curious as to just how close this system would focus so we placed a dollar bill on the front of the dome port and in less than a second the image was

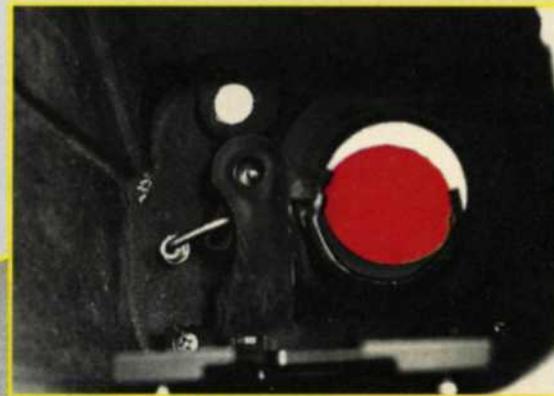
Right: Ikelite's housing comes with a color correction filter. This reddish filter compensates for the blue cast that dominates underwater.



Left: The aluminum housing has two sections, making assembly quick and easy.

KEY FEATURES

- Extremely lightweight—12 pounds
- Compact design: 13x8x14 inches
- Easy to assemble
- Filter control
- VHS-C format
- Autofocus from macro to wide angle
- Video-Eye viewfinder
- Wide angle lens included
- Tested to 300 feet



in sharp focus. We were even more impressed when we turned the filter wheel inside the housing to a halfway point, where the edge of the filter was in the light path. In about a second the edge of the filter was sharp. Focus from inside the housing to infinity—and without touching or changing any control!

SETTING UP THE SYSTEM

Assembling the camera and housing is extremely easy and takes just a couple of minutes. We recommend you first test the housing in the water without the camera installed, even though Ikelite pressure tests every housing U/W. This is a standard practice for all housings being used for the first time. Take the housing down to 30 feet and move all the controls several times. After returning to the surface, open the housing and check for leaks. Next, remove the standard eyepiece from the JVC camera and attach the Video-Eye. Don't forget to load a fresh tape. A small, slotted baseplate is then attached to the camera. Remove the backplate and pull out the two controls on the right side of the housing so you can insert the camera. Once it is in place, push the two controls back in and align all controls with the camera. Oper-

ate all the camera functions and then attach the housing back. Operate the camera controls one more time—before entering the water—and you are ready to go. Once you are on the bottom, turn on the camera and start recording. Depending on the type of tape you use, you will have from 55 to 100 minutes of recording time on VHS-C tape.

CONCLUSIONS

We found this camera and housing combination to be remarkable. As still photographers, we can appreciate the reason many people hesitate to try underwater video. Until recently the cameras were large; the housings even larger and heavier. When these reluctant photographers try this JVC/Ikelite combination, they'll be hooked for sure—we are!

The Ikelite housing, model 6005.73, comes complete with JVC GR-AX7 camera, Ikelite's aluminum video carrying case, wide angle lens, Video-Eye and UR/Pro color filter. This system sells for \$2,094. Ikelite housing model 6005.71 comes without the JVC camera and sells for \$995. For further information contact Ikelite Underwater Systems at 50 West 33rd Street, Indianapolis, IN 46208 or call (317) 923-4523. 🐟