

Gadgets: A solution for working with underwater cameras

July 2 2009, By Gregg Ellman

Anyone who takes underwater photos knows how challenging it is to navigate in the water while holding a camera. Another obstacle can be trying to see through the camera's viewfinder or LCD screen while wearing an underwater mask.

A company called Liquid Image has eliminated this problem with its Digital Underwater Camera Mask. The mask looks like any other except it has a built-in waterproof [digital camera](#) embedded to capture both still images and video, thus eliminating the headache of holding a camera.

I've tested many underwater digital cameras and I'll be honest, I was kind of skeptical about how this would perform. The company always displayed really nice underwater photos on both its Web site and booths at recent trade shows, showing images taken in swimming pools as well as the ocean.

I took the 5-megapixel-cameramask (Model 302 -- Explorer Series Camera Mask- \$99) out on a recent snorkeling trip in Mexico. I was pleasantly surprised at how well the mask worked in a very simple manner.

Like any other digital camera, you must make sure the battery is charged, the lens is clean and you have a decent size memory card with free space. This camera takes 2 AAA alkaline batteries, uses Micro SD cards (up to 2 GB) and the front of the mask acts as the lens.

Although there is 16 MB of internal memory, this will only give you a handful of photos so I wouldn't adventure into the ocean without a memory card.

The camera will work in depths up to 15 feet and has a 120-second auto off system to preserve [battery power](#).

Once you are in the environment where you want to take photos, line the photo up with crosshair marks on the mask and press the capture button. A small [LED light](#) indicates which mode the camera is in (red for still and blue for video).

Other digital cameras I've tested underwater can take better photos but none were easier to use. While snorkeling I did get a little frustrated by not having a lens, which would zoom closer to my subject, but the simplicity of the unit overshadowed that.

Earlier this year Liquid Image announced some newer high-end models, which have much improved quality. They include the following.

- Scuba Series HD320 (\$250) captures HD video at a 720p (1280 by 720) resolution at a rate up to 30 frames per second (fps) along with audio and 5-megapixel still images. Users can take it down to depths of 115-feet (35 meters). Expected to be available later this summer.
- Image PRO HD350 Camera/Video Mask is for professional scuba divers who want to go to depths up to 330 feet (100 meters). The video and still resolutions are the same as the HD320. The price and release date has not been announced yet.
- VideoMask 310 (\$159) takes video (720 by 480) at a rate of up to 30 frames per second along with 5-megapixel still images. It has a depth rating of 33 feet (10 meters).

With any of these cameras, the images can be downloaded by either connecting a USB cable directly to the camera or by removing the memory card for downloading with a memory card reader.

Details: www.liquidimageco.com

A new desktop dual alarm clock from iLuv, the iMM153 brings to life the term shake and wake, not to be confused with Shake 'N Bake chicken my mom used to make.

Like everything else made in the universe today, it charges and plays an iPod and has an auxiliary line so the few people on earth who don't have an iPod but has another device with a 3.5mm jack can use the unit.

Users can wake to their tunes in seven different ways along with a unique Bed Shaker. The Bed Shaker is an extendable part of the unit, which can be placed in the bed to vibrate when the alarm goes off.

The dual alarm clock is ideal for people who need to wake at different times. Once the alarm goes off for the first person, they can strategically place the Bed Shaker for the other person to vibrate awake.

Other features include an easy-to-read display, which has 10 levels of dimmer control and an FM stereo with programmable presets for 10 radio stations.

The unit will be available in July for \$59.99 in four colors (black, blue, pink and white).

Details: www.i-luv.com

While the iPhone and its applications are taking over the world, BlackBerry has its own App World with many great programs.

Among them is a featured category, Personal Health and Wellness, which is ideal for those wanting to get in shape this summer.

- Trimble AllSport GPS (\$19.99), let's exercisers track speed, distance and calories burned on their handheld device.
- FitDeck Mobile (\$14.99) is for beginners and has 50 different equipment-free exercises. Users can target the exercises for targeting different areas of their body while also customizing the intensity.
- Total Fitness (\$9.99) is for the more advanced exercise-savvy and is a personal trainer and nutritionist all in one.
- Calorie Tracker by LIVESTRONG (\$2.99) provides nutrition facts along with tracking calorie intake with a personalized nutrition diary. Users can customize goals along with weight tracking and a customized exercise log.
- GoodFoodNearYou is a free download, which will locate healthy restaurants in your area. They are sorted by lowest calories, carbs or fat.

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Citation: Gadgets: A solution for working with underwater cameras (2009, July 2) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-07-gadgets-solution-underwater-cameras.html>

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