

# Fantasea FP7000

by Peter Rowlands

The Coolpix brand has traditionally been Nikon's mid level compact range but with the advent of the P7000 it has aimed it's sights directly at the top end which in the past has been dominated by the Canon G and Panasonic LX compact cameras. The result is a chunky, fully featured pro level camera with a high specification that will appeal to those who want the controllability of an SLR without the bulk.

I don't intend to delve into the camera's pros and cons as there are several excellent websites that provide such information and advice so if you are interested in this level of camera I'll suggest [www.dpreview.com](http://www.dpreview.com) as a good start.

The Fantasea line of housings is a well established brand who have majored in housing Nikon compacts and the FP7000 is their latest for the Coolpix P7000. Just as Nikon raised their sights with the spec of their camera, so too have Fantasea upped their quality output with an excellent housing both in terms of moulding, construction, design and finish.

The housing is opened with a large oval turn button on the right hand side which has an integrated safety lock. The red lever is lifted away from the housing and allows the large button to be rotated anti clockwise to open the rear door and reveal the inner workings of the housing.

Most notable at first is the main double O ring seal, compression and piston. In common with most compact housings both sections are bristling with controls – push buttons, dials and wheels, which operate all of the functions of the camera. There



are as many controls as there are on most SLR housings so it's a wonder how they can provide all at such a competitive price. All of the controls are very clearly marked. In fact some of the most clearly marked that I have ever seen and that makes controlling the camera much quicker and more

accurate.

Loading the camera is a piece of doddle. Fantasea recommend removing the camera's strap lugs but in practice, if they are lifted up, they don't get in the way. Then all you have to do is lift the front mode dial and feed the camera into the front



of the housing where it is held very precisely in 8 padded supports and four front posts. All but 3 of the controls auto locate and these are the three control wheels which, when turned, it shows up on the LCD screen what setting has been chosen so it's not a problem. In reality it doesn't take a second to align these controls and the likelihood is that once it's done you won't need to realign them again.

There are 2 ways flash lit photos can be taken. The first is with the built in strobe and, to get even coverage, you need to attach the large front diffuser. The second is to fit the supplied double fibre optic cable plate

to trigger external strobes for more controlled lighting.

Fantasea produce a range of accessories to make this a true system camera so it can be expanded to suit your photographic needs. The housing is 18 x 15 x 13.5 cm in size. On land, with the camera inserted, it weighs just 1.1kg which in saltwater becomes 0.3kg negative.

At \$599 the Fantasea FP7000 is the least expensive rigid housing on the market and I would argue that it is the market leader in terms of quality, performance and therefore value for money.

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