

THE NEW KISSLITE

Reviewed by John Keedwell



Sometimes a gadget comes along that is apparently quite familiar, but on closer inspection is really rather different and worth a closer look. Most camera developments are nowadays mainly variations on an old idea, and simply make the camera do things which were previously possible but might have been more difficult. (Such developments might be camera ramping speeds connected to shutter angle or aperture, for example) Another recent innovation might be using a PDA to instantly calculate and display lens depth of field. These are both factors that we could actually do in other ways for many years, but developments in technology means they can be achieved quicker and more accurately and possibly with much clearer displays.

So when I initially heard about the Kisslite - a brand new camera mountable ring light - I was initially unsurprised as I had obviously seen a few different various sized ring-lights before, of course. However, on closer examination I realised that this light was actually very well thought-out and was probably not even possible to be manufactured even maybe a year ago due to some of the new technology involved.

In short, the Kisslite utilises the latest breed of very accurate colour-corrected LED's set in a circular mount, which neatly fits around the camera lens in place of a matte box. It can be dimmed right down to approx 5% power without any change of colour temperature, and there are 4 independent sectors that can be independently switched if needed.

The Kisslite is decidedly deceptive, and it is clear that it was not produced by simply taking a few LED's and making a circular casing for them, as I found out while talking to David Amphlett, the British cameraman who was the inventor of the

light. For example, the colour characteristics of the LED's were chosen to be extremely accurate, and there is also some clever electronics involved to make them fully dimmable. The LED's also have lenses that are carefully angled to optimise the output to a wider angle than the circle of the light itself. It is designed to run off any power source from a 12v to 24v battery and also universal mains power, and the battery charger is also self-seeking universal voltage, so no compatibility problems are likely to be encountered. There are also optional step down rings from 80mm to 104mm currently available along with rotating filter trays, an adjustable eyebrow French flag and pre-cut accurate colour correction filters.

The main advantage of this new type of LED means they can be dimmed without changing colour-unlike many other hot lamps, which change colour with changing voltage, of course. They LED's are also completely flicker-free even while

dimmed, and the luminance pattern covers an area that is optimised to throw light onto an area of a 1.85 film camera or 16 x 9 widescreen TV camera frame.

Whilst the Kisslite was primarily engineered for film and some TV cameras-and it is most likely to be mounted around the lens just like a regular matte box with Arri standard 19mm bars which fit 35mm cameras and 16mm cameras. However it is actually compact, light and mobile enough to be successfully used on film or video cameras without matte box bars by clamping the unit to the front of the lens with an enclosed step down-ring designed for the purpose.

Due its low weight and battery operation it can also be used onboard a Steadicam rig when an on-camera axis eye-light is perhaps needed. We have perhaps all been there on a shoot when a small lamp such as a Mizar is required with a small piece of F1 or F2 over it to track with the camera down a narrow corridor. Then there is a search for a long enough mains cable and someone to walk with the lamp keeping it in relationship alongside the camera.

Due to the nature of the light, the most likely people to utilise the somewhat unique properties of this light are DoP's who shoot Commercials-especially beauty shots, Pop Promos, feature films and TV drama and documentary camera people, also some stills photographers who may desire a special look. The Kisslite can also be successfully used on many Medium format and digital stills cameras.

More information and photographs can be found at the website:

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