


Test Drive II

# Elinchrom Ranger Quadra kit

Location flash is currently a hot product and Elinchrom's new Ranger Quadras have the potential to raise interest levels still higher. Bob Martin got his hands on a kit to discover what all the fuss is about **WORDS & PICTURES** Bob Martin

On-location flash is definitely in vogue at the moment, and you only have to look around at the amount of strobist-style shops, websites and books that are flourishing right now to realise that. On the one hand you can adopt the small and handy strobist approach utilising on or off-camera flashguns and on the other you have the large portable flash option. Both have their pros and cons so that's where this new Elinchrom Ranger Quadra kit comes in. It bridges the gap between the two methods and claims to offer plenty of power in a small package.

Okay, so you may think that you've seen small, lightweight flash heads before, but you're not likely to have ever seen anything quite like this. The Quadras have a very sleek, modern appearance and, at just 250g each, they weigh next to nothing: to put that remark into context they are around half as heavy as a Nikon SB-900 (415g without batteries) and a Canon 580EX II (405g without batteries). To be entirely fair you do need to add the weight of the pack and battery as well but even then the total weight is only 3kg. That really is a portable package compared to all the other big flash system out there, but of course the concessions come in terms of power and potential number of flashes before the battery runs out.

The modelling lamp utilised by the heads is of particular interest as well. They are daylight LED lights which are not only great for the standard purpose but are also perfect as video lights. So if you are one of the new generation of photographers shooting video, then you can get more than your money's worth, achieving around about one-and-a-half hour's worth of illumination on a single battery.

The Quadra heads are available in two types, A and S. So what are the differences between them except that the A head costs an extra £29? It's to do with flash duration. The S head has a maximum flash duration of 1/3200sec while the A head can be as quick as 1/6000sec, and this differentiation can be extremely important for those who shoot action among other things. Just as a comparison, the Nikon SB-900 has a flash duration of around 1/880sec at max power and the Canon 580EXII is slightly slower at 1/833sec so there's a clear advantage over flashguns here. Meanwhile other small flash units can produce similar speeds but not at full power, which is where the Quadras pull ahead of the direct competition again.

The two channels provided on the pack aren't identical however. Channel A is the high power channel and offers 25-400Ws when used on its own while the superfast Channel B offers 8.2-132Ws when used separately. When you plug a head into each of them the power is split 2:1, which translates into 66% to Channel A and 33% >

**Specs**

**Price:** £1121 (one head kit), £1493 (two head kit)
**Pack weight:** Power Unit 1.4 kg / Battery 1.6 kg / Total 3.0 kg
**Pack size:** 15 x 8.5 x 21 cm
**Battery charge time:** 2 hours
**Power:** 6.6 f/stop range 8.2 - 400 Ws
**Head size:** 9 x 8 x 11 cm / 250 g
**Flashes:** 110 Fast, 150 Slow recycle
**Recycle time:** 2.2 seconds, full power, fast
**S Head flash duration (at full power, t 0.5):** High power channel A - 1/1300 s, Superfast channel B - 1/3200 s, Both channels - 1/1800 s
**A Head flash duration (at full power, t 0.5):** High power channel A - 1/3000 s, Superfast channel B - 1/6000 s, Both channels - 1/4000 s
**Colour temperature:** 5560 K

**LEFT AND OVER-LEAF: These images were shot in a deserted underground bunker where there was no ambient light at all. The LED modelling lights on the Quadra heads really came into their own here and lit up the room enough for me to work in. Often you'll find yourself working in environments where there isn't enough ambient light to get an autofocus lock, so this is a huge advantage over using flashguns.**