

Get past the alphanumeric nomenclature and discover a top-notch wireless system.

BY STAN SHOLIK

# Qflash goes further

WIRELESS FLASH  
OPTIONS FROM  
QUANTUM INSTRUMENTS



All images © Stan Sholik

Wireless connectivity is all the rage in computers and home electronics. And if you believe the ads, it's something we all need, whether we realize it or not.

In this instance, photographers were years ahead of the curve. When we seized the convenience of wireless connectivity between cameras and flash units, it wasn't a question of need, but whether to go with the camera manufacturer's wireless flash system or use one from a third-party manufacturer.

Sticking with the camera maker's system let you retain all of the camera's built-in flash functions, such as TTL flash control, flash bracketing and fill-flash rationing. Going with a third-party system often meant sacrificing those functions, but in return for greater wireless range, the use of more powerful flash units, and control over

With the Quantum QTTL system, there are no cords for power or flash sync, allowing you to move about freely, experiment with different angles and still get perfect exposures every time. Here, I bounced the T5d head into a white umbrella and used TTL metering with a Nikon D2X.



## specs: Quantum Qflash T5d

**FLASH POWER:** 150 watt-seconds

**GUIDE NUMBER WITH NORMAL REFLECTOR:**  
160 feet at ISO 100

**AUTO RANGE WITH NORMAL REFLECTOR:**  
113 feet at ISO 100

**RECYCLE TIME WITH TURBO 2X2 BATTERY:**  
1.9 seconds

**APPROX. SIZE WITHOUT REFLECTOR:** 6x6x3 inches

**WEIGHT:** 26 oz.

**MSRP:** Qflash T5d head, \$798; QTTL adapters, \$153; FW7Q receiver, \$184; FW9T, \$231. There's special pricing for kits consisting of a transmitter and receiver, along with a mounting kit and connector cords for the flash heads.

For close-up photos the TTL exposure was right on, even with a predominantly white subject. The wide-angle diffuser was used over the T5d head pointed at the flower.

multiple flash units in more complex ways.

With a variety of new products, Quantum Instruments now introduces wireless flash control for a powerful, versatile flash head without having to sacrifice the camera's built-in flash functions. The Quantum QTTL System consists of a new Qflash 5d head and an array of transmitters, receivers and accessories to tailor the system to your needs. The choices are so varied that the system's only downside seems to be the difficulty of assembling the right combination of components, then learning how to use the specific functions you need from the broad selection available.

The Qflash 5d is identical to the Qflash 4d in looks and basic specifications, including a guide number of 160 (in feet at ISO 100 with the normal 4.5-inch parabolic reflector), and about 2-second recycling at full power. The included flat diffuser for the reflector can increase the

coverage to 70 degrees (about that of a 28mm lens on a 35mm camera) from the normal reflector's 55-degree coverage.

What's new is the ability to use the 5d with film or digital cameras that use pre-flash evaluative metering to determine flash exposure, and several new features for wireless TTL operation. These features are available in conjunction with the new Dw series QTTL adapters and FreeXWire receivers FW7Q and FW8R, transmitter FW9T and transceiver FW10w. It's possible to upgrade a 4d flash to a 5d, and the FW10 transceiver to an FW10w.

The compact new FW7Q receiver unit mounts flush with 5d or 4d flash heads. The FW9T transmitter attaches to the camera's hot shoe with an FW12 hot shoe adapter, providing wireless triggering control of the head. For even greater control, you can attach the FW9T to a new Dw series QTTL adapter.

The new Dw QTTL adapters slide into the camera hot shoe to turn the 5d into a fully dedicated flash that mimics

all of the features of the camera maker's dedicated units. With cameras that support these functions, the Dw adapter provides a ready-flash indicator in the viewfinder, front- or rear-curtain sync, auto fill flash of -3 to +2 f-stops, auto focus assist, TTL and pre-flash metering, and full dedication. Dw adapters are available for all current film and digital camera models from Canon, Nikon, Olympus, Contax, Mamiya and Hasselblad, including the H2 and H2D. The Dw adapter can also be connected directly to the 5d flash for on-camera flash.

The system I tested for this review consisted of the Qflash 5d head, FW9T transmitter, FW7Q receiver and Nikon D2X Dw QTTL adapter. When I placed the Dw adapter in the camera's hot shoe and connected it to the FW9T transmitter with a coiled cord, I had to figure out what to do with the transmitter. I thought of attaching it to the camera bottom with velcro provided, but ended up just putting it in my shirt pocket with the antenna down. Having a belt

## THE GOODS: PRO REVIEW

clip for it or a way to secure it to the camera strap would have been better. Quantum does provide a nice strap system for attaching it to a tripod leg, but that negates one of the big advantages of wireless—the freedom to move around, exploring different camera angles while maintaining correct exposures.

For on-camera flash, I use my Nikon flash units in Auto mode, letting the flash determine the exposure, which provides more consistent exposure than the TTL mode. I generally use these flash units for fill light only, unless I'm shooting an event. I appreciated being able to use the Quantum system this way, too. With the Qflash in Auto mode, my exposures were consistently accurate, even with varying apertures. A glance at the LCD screen on the back of the 5d assured me that all the relevant information was properly displayed.

Sensor Limit, a highly practical Auto mode, lets you set the approximate distance from flash to subject, forcing the unit to ignore light returned from beyond that distance, which generally eliminates overexposing subjects in large, dark rooms.

When I switched from wireless Auto to wireless QTTL for a close-up photograph of a blossom on my white Christmas cactus, I was surprised to see that again the exposure was right-on throughout a range of aperture settings and exposure adjustments. I was able to move side-to-side and forward-and-back, trying different framings, and still get perfect exposure every time.

With the QTTL system giving me newfound confidence in TTL flash, I decided to take the Quantum system rather than my usual AC-powered equipment to a location portrait shoot of a family

on the porch of their new home. No need to run power cords people could trip over, and the unit had enough power to bounce the light into a white umbrella for a main light. Again, I was able to move around and try different angles, and still get consistent exposure.

One Qflash 5d head with the appropriate wireless accessories makes an excellent location set-up for fill-flash or simple lighting needs. Adding more heads increases the system's versatility on location and makes it appropriate for use in the studio. With multiple heads, one 5d mounted on the camera can wirelessly control numerous others with the necessary transmitters and receivers. You'll have to log some study time with the manuals to learn the difference between zones and channels, and how to set, test and adjust each head to achieve the desired lighting effect.

The new FreeXWire FW8R receiver can be connected to any of these additional Qflash heads, or used in place of the FW7Q for wireless TTL. It can also receive wireless flash sync for any type of shoe, handle-mount or studio flash. With the appropriate shutter release cord connected to the FW8R, it's even possible to activate the camera shutter from up to 1,000 feet away. The FreeXWire FW10w transceiver can perform these functions as well, in addition to being able to serve as either a transmitter or a receiver.

Quantum's QTTL system puts together everything a film or digital photographer might need to free himself from both AC power and interconnecting control cords. With the wide array of accessories for the Quantum flash heads, this adds up to a compact yet versatile system for both location and studio work. ■