

And the winner is broncolor

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First Look-Broncolor Senso & Litos

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When it comes to photographic strobe equipment, two manufacturers have traditionally stood at the top of the industry in terms of quality, features, system expandability, and naturally, cost: ProFoto and Broncolor.

While the high end of the Broncolor line has more than held it's own in competition with ProFoto high end products, the entry level category has been a walk-off home run for ProFoto with the success of the Acute and Acute 2r system.

Light, speedy, reasonably durable, and affordable, the ProFoto Acutes (and current Acute 2R generation) have been the leading premium entry level lighting kit of choice for years.

At this year's Photokina, Broncolor announced a new power pack, the Senso, and a new accompanying Lamphead, the Litos. We had the Senso/Litos Kit in our Atlanta office and took it for a few turns around the track.



At first glance, I looked at the Senso pack, and I thought, geez that looks well made. Solid. Just from that comparison alone, I felt like this is going to spur some competition to the Acute. The Acute feels a bit less robust next to the Senso, a bit less refined and polished, you can see those screws in the front. It's misleading to some degree, but those rubber bumpers on the corners of the Senso and the simple, sturdy feel of the handle say – advantage Senso.


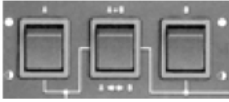


The Lamphead is a different story. If I dropped an Acute head and a Litos head onto a concrete floor, my money would be on the Acute head. But the Litos sure looks pretty. Stylin'. The Litos has a nice handle for adjusting the angle of the head, I liked that. It felt a little less clunky than the Acute in that regard. Of course the Senso can take every Broncolor head available (all 7 of them, Pulso G, Pulso 8, Pulso Twin, Unilite, Picolite, Mobilite-2, Litos,), while the Acute packs takes the Acute/D4 single and twin heads, but not the Pro Heads or the Acute B Heads. So, if you prefer something different than the Litos head, you have a lot of alternative choices on the Senso with all the other Broncolor heads.



So, back to the Senso. The other day one of my clients, who has owned ProFoto and recently added Broncolor, made the comment that she really liked the Broncolor, but it seemed complicated by comparison (pointing to her Broncolor Mobil-A2R pack). I spent about 2 minutes going over the pack with her and then she realized it was so simple, she assumed there had to be more to it and she couldn't figure out the "more to it" part. But there wasn't. I showed her, you want more power? Press the arrow here for 1/10 stop increase or decrease. Press and hold the arrow for full stop increase or decrease. She was really looking for something like this:

Acute1200e

ONE FLASH HEAD		Group A (Ws)	Group B (Ws)
● A + B ●		1200 (1/1)	---
● A + B Ⓜ		900	---
● A ↔ B		600 (1/2)	---
Ⓜ A ↔ B		300 (1/4)	---
Ⓜ A ↔ B	Ⓜ	150 (1/8)	---

TWO FLASH HEADS Symmetrical (or twin-head)			
● A + B ●	---	---	600 + 600
Ⓜ A + B ●	---	---	450 + 450
A ↔ B ●	---	---	300 + 300
A ↔ B Ⓜ	---	---	150 + 150
A ↔ B Ⓜ	Ⓜ	---	75 + 75

TWO FLASH HEADS Asymmetrical			
● A ↔ B Ⓜ	---	600	300
● A ↔ B Ⓜ	Ⓜ	300	150

THREE FLASH HEADS Symmetrical			
● A + B ●	---	400	400 + 400
Ⓜ A + B ●	---	300	300 + 300
Ⓜ A + B Ⓜ	---	200	200 + 200
Ⓜ A + B Ⓜ	Ⓜ	100	100 + 100

THREE FLASH HEADS Asymmetrical			
● A ↔ B ●	---	600	300 + 300
● A ↔ B Ⓜ	---	600	150 + 150
Ⓜ A ↔ B Ⓜ	---	300	150 + 150
Ⓜ A ↔ B Ⓜ	Ⓜ	150	75 + 75

This comes attached to the side of every Acute pack. Ratios and combinations. It's a schematic for how you dial the power up or down on an Acute pack. With the Senso (and most Broncolor packs) you don't need a secret formula. You just press the arrow up or down.

The Senso does come with some bells and whistles though. With the press of a button, you can display your energy settings in f-stops or watt seconds. It also has a built-in RFS unit with no antennae to knock off or break. The Acute R series includes a built-in pocket wizard, but it requires a screw-in antennae for signaling. But either pack can accept an external pocket wizard (or Air Sync) via an accessory cable. The RFS Wireless Transmitters for Broncolor are very underrated. They can remotely control an RFS broncolor Pack's power settings. The battery life is good for years and they have a much smaller footprint than most other wireless transmitters. In the past they were way too expensive, but now are in the same price range as the pocket wizards.



Pricing for the Senso is in the same neighborhood as the Acute Series, depending on configuration. Performance-wise, the Acute still has an edge for flash duration, but in most other performance criteria, they are very close, or to the advantage of the Senso. I think Broncolor has a winner here – the kit is physically as small as the equivalent Acute kit, it feels more durable (the pack, anyway), it performs well, and is compatible with the entire Broncolor system. The Acute is still a great system, but now there are *two* excellent choices for premium quality, entry level strobe systems.

Specifications

Lamphead Outlets

Dimensions

Weight

Total Energy

Energy Range (total)

Energy Range (asymmetric)

Energy Control increments

Flash Durations (full power - t 0.5)

Recycle Times

Max Modeling Lamp

Senso A2

3

8x5.8x8.6

10.1 lbs

1200Ws

6.5 f-stops

5 f-stops

1/10

1/600 s

0.4 - 1.5 s

650W

Acute2R 1200

3

8.7x7x5.5

9 lbs

1200Ws

6 f-stops

4 f-stops

1/4

1/3200 s

0.09 - 1.5 s

500W