

Elemental Trinity twin-head studio flash kit

With a price tag of less than £700 for a powerful 600Ws twin-head kit, the **Trinity Twin** is potentially the hottest lighting on the market. **Mat Gallagher** finds out whether it is value for money

AS WE showed in our flash head buyers' guide in AP 9 April, studio lighting is no longer prohibitively expensive for the amateur user. So long as you have the space, you can set up a basic studio for less than £300. These entry-level kits are more than adequate for still-life and head-and-shoulders shots, but as they come with low-powered heads and often slow refresh times, photographing anything larger or more demanding requires something a little more meaty.

While there are plenty of budget kits available, until recently the jump to larger and more powerful models was a big one – to reach beyond the 500Ws mark meant paying more than £1,200 for kit from the likes of Elinchrom or Bowens. Elemental, however, is one of a small number of brands that have plugged this gap in the market, offering higher performance models at lower prices. Its new Trinity range includes a variety of kits of differing power ratings and accessories, designed for the more demanding photographer.

FEATURES

The Trinity twin-head kit includes two flash heads, stands and reflectors, all packed into a handy case. The standard kit features 400Ws flash heads, but the kit is customisable and allows you to upgrade these to 600Ws, 800Ws or 1,000Ws for an extra £52, £103 or £154 per head respectively. For this test I've upgraded the heads to the 600Ws versions, and added a black/silver umbrella, a 90cm octagonal softbox with honeycomb grid, and the Trinity

STANDARD KIT INCLUDES:

- 2x 400Ws Trinity heads
- 2x spill kill detachable dish reflectors
- 2x 150W modelling bulbs
- 2x sync leads
- 2x light stands
- Radio transmitter
- Radio receiver
- Padded stand case
- Standard kit price £440

KIT TESTED ALSO INCLUDES:

- 2x 600Ws Trinity Pro heads (+£103.98) (in place of 400Ws heads)
- 1x 110cm black/silver umbrella (+£12.99)
- 1x 90cm octagonal softbox with grid (+£51.99)
- 1x Trinity Fire rolling case (+£40)
- Total cost of standard kit plus extras £648.96



The Trinity twin-head kit with black/silver umbrella, 90cm octagonal softbox and Trinity Fire rolling case

Fire rolling case, for a total cost of £648.96. The flash heads are made from an aluminium alloy and coated with a polyresin to give a rubberised finish. The power display has a digital readout and can be varied between 1/32 and full power in 0.1EV steps. The units are fan-cooled with an auto power dump, and have powerful 250W modelling lamps (available with the 600Ws heads and above). The 600Ws heads we tested have a guide number of 82m @ ISO 100 and a recycle time of between 0.2 and 1.2secs.

The front diffusers (modifiers) use an S-mount system that is compatible with the Bowens fitting. As standard, the kit comes with basic spill kill dishes, but again there is a choice of upgrades, from silver/back umbrellas at £13 each to 140cm octagonal softboxes for £62. Providing the kit options on this basis does keep the cost down and means you are not paying for accessories

and equipment you don't need. Plus, any additions you do want to make are still reasonably priced.

All kits also come with a set of wireless triggers – a transmitter and receiver – and two sync cables, although it is a shame that these aren't optional. It's also disappointing that the wireless trigger cannot be upgraded to the superior but vastly more expensive PocketWizard Plus II transceivers that also feature on Elemental's website (www.studio-flash.com).

BUILD AND USE

The first thing you notice about this kit is just how slick it all is. The build quality of the Trinity range is far superior to that of other budget kits we have tested in the past, and with the Trinity prices starting from just £440 it costs little more than a budget kit. The Trinity Fire rolling case (£40 upgrade) is made from a toughened fabric with

strengthened sides to maintain its shape, even when empty. The equipment fits neatly inside the case which, though sizeable, can be easily transported thanks to the wheels.

The lighting stands are sturdy, with air-cushioned sections to prevent high drops that could damage the flash head. Although perhaps not the heaviest stands, they are more than adequate for the full range of Trinity accessories. The included wireless trigger system reduces the need for batteries by powering the receiver through the same mains lead as the flash head. The mains lead plugs into the receiver, which in turn plugs into the flash head. Of course, this does mean that if you want to swap the receiver to a different light you must unplug it, but this is really not much of a problem.

All the flash heads, from 400Ws up to 1,000Ws, feature the same finish and features. (The only exception is that the 400Ws kit includes lower powered 150W modelling lamps.) The rubberised finish looks and feels well made. The back panel is clean and simple, with six buttons and blue lights to confirm when each is in a selected position. The power output is displayed on the LED panel, so it is quick to check at a

distance. The confirmation beep can be turned on or off and the modelling lights set to full, proportional or off. The well-designed modifier mount makes it easy to attach a range of accessories, although it doesn't feel quite as durable as the metal mounts on the likes of Bowens heads, nor can it beat the simplicity of Profoto's clamp mount. Some more expensive kits provide a protective glass dome over the flash bulb and modelling lamp, but this isn't present here so care must be taken not to knock them when attaching or removing diffusers.

The quality of the kit is matched by that of the accessories, which are made from thicker materials and generally feel better made than the usual entry-level umbrellas and softboxes. The 90cm octagonal softbox isn't the easiest to construct, but with a bit of practice you start to get the hang of it. It features two levels of diffusion,

The 600Ws flash means the highly diffused softbox has enough power to be used as the main light, which is flattering for portraits



SPECIFICATION

Strobe Power	400Ws	600Ws	800Ws	1,000Ws
Guide number	65m @ ISO 100	82m @ ISO 100	88m @ ISO 100	98m @ ISO 100
Recycle Time	0.2–1sec	0.2–1.2secs	0.3–1.5secs	0.3–2secs
Weight	2.6kg	2.9kg	3.1kg	3.6kg
Modelling light	150W	250W	250W	250W



The flash heads have large, clear buttons and LED displays for power output

and a large, detachable (via Velcro) honeycomb grid that fits over the front. The spill kill dishes have a slot through which the umbrella can be fitted and held in place under the head.

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

Once the kit is set up, the modelling bulbs give more than enough light to allow for focusing and, using the proportional settings, they give a good idea of how the lighting will look. Due to the sheer power of the 600Ws head, it is possible to use the maximum diffusion from the octagonal softbox and still create masses of light. With the main light on full power and the black/silver umbrella used as a fill-in, I could shoot at f/14–16 at ISO 100 for a full-length portrait. This meant I could achieve a really soft light with a full tonal range. Although lower powered lights are capable of full-length coverage, the light achieved by the Trinity kit is richer and more controlled.

At full power, the lights match their stated 1.2sec recycle time, which is pretty impressive and fast enough for most subjects. The white balance of the lights is given as 5,500K ±100, and with the camera set manually to this figure I found most images to be almost neutral straight out of the camera, with only a hue shift needed towards green (roughly -20 in Adobe Camera Raw). **AP**

Verdict

IF YOU'RE looking for studio lighting to cover group shots, or just full-length portraits, the Trinity kits are well worth considering. The range's recent reshuffle has led to a more simplified selection process and, although the entry price of £440 is a little way off what you are likely to spend, the upgrades are well priced and our chosen specification was still very competitive at around £650. This is a semi-professional kit for entry-level money, and although it's unlikely to tempt professionals, it will provide amateurs with a high-quality product that gives great results.

