

20% of those who entered UPY 2018 are going to agree with almost everything I am about to say and just over 2% of those will agree with everything because they won a Category in UPY 2018 and the other 18% were in the top 110 images.

That leaves 80% who may already have stopped reading because, for the moment, they think competitions really suck; and that's perfectly understandable.

After UPY 2017, the percentages would have been about the same; it would be just a different set of names. Euphoric last year, despondent this.

In addition I have always said that if UPY 2018 was judged on another a day, the top ten images in each category would almost certainly be the same but the order might not. That's purely because we are all slightly different day to day and that is the nature of a competition. It's all about how the judges felt at that particular time.

So far I've still not written anything that will appease the 80% but, as (I think) the late great fashion photographer Terence Donovan said "It's all about having an opinion". By entering a competition all you are doing is asking for the judges' opinions.

LED flashguns

One thing's for sure with technology; it will happen eventually.

When the humble LED first appeared it was greeted with initial amazement. Instant on/off, no filament, low current, low heat, a choice of colours and very simple i.e positive/minus, On/Off. As with all new developments they were expensive at first and then the price tumbled as production could be ramped up to supply demand.

Fast forward nearly four decades and that simple device has been developed beyond all recognition so that now, in the underwater photographic world, we have LED lights which are extremely bright but which, for the first time, can also replace traditional flashguns.

It's true that at present their output in terms of light duration is not as fast as a traditional flashgun and they do not yet have the sophistication of TTL capability but, as I said at the beginning, it will happen eventually.

Green Planet 1

It always hacks me off when I hear that a friend of mine not 10 miles away has had a free upgrade of his broadband speed from 100 to 200 mbps when I still have to get by with a measly 8mbps at best. Wouldn't it be fairer firstly for me to be upgraded to 16mbps (which I'd be delighted with) and then, the 100's could have their 200?

I will admit that I had a similar hack when Blue Planet II came out. Now don't get me wrong, BP II has been an absolute joy; a great flag bearer for our world and which has started the global awareness of the plastic peril (more on that in a minute) but I'd be much happier if they produced a Green Planet 1 first before committing funds to BP II.

Sure, blue water covers most of our marine area but it's green relative is no less amazing visually and is equally well off in terms of inhabitants and stories.

With today's incredible video cameras and their high ISO and SloMo capabilities coupled with high output LED lighting, green could surely be the new blue?

Planet Plastic

I feel vindicated about accusing us of falsely presenting the underwater world as too colourful, healthy and perfectly natural when the truth is, in some areas, there is a really big problem; plastic pollution.

My argument was that if the general public 'saw' it, they'd 'get it' but it took the non threatening tones of Sir Attenborough in the final series of Blue Planet II together with honest images to finally persuade the world at large, and much more importantly, the media, that this was becoming crucial. It's a bit like you'd listen to your grandad but no way was your dad right!

The result of such an approach has been, for the time being, seismic and long may it continue. Only people power will make commerce pay attention and only education including truthful images will bring about long term and permanent change.

There's a long way to go but we've also suddenly come a long way.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com