

The Shot Chat

UPY 2021 Primer

With the deadline for the Underwater Photographer of the Year getting close, we decided it would be good to discuss the competition, share advice on how we select images for entry, and personal stories of what happened after winning.

The Shot Chat panel brings to the table: 2 title wins, 5 category wins, and over a dozen images awarded in UPY since it was brought back to life in 2015. We also invited Richard Barnden, overall winner of Underwater Photographer of the Year in 2019, as our guest star for this chat.

Richard stands out as a man of incredible enthusiasm and passion for the aquatic world's most adrenaline charged events. He spent years trying to crack the pattern of mass spawning events in Palau, and is now looked up to as the go-to guy in this area.

An experienced rebreather diver, he is driven by the exploration of nature underwater, pushing the envelope to witness unique scenes, and share them with others.

You can find out more on his website:

www.richardbarnden.com
and on Instagram.



Will you be entering UPY 2021? And why?

Richard Barnden:

I will most certainly be entering UPY 2021, although it's been a tough year shooting we have a few extra years to pull out some images from our archives we may have missed. Not sure I have anything really special but let's see, that's the fun of it all. I feel this is the most prestigious underwater competition out there. The amount of media attention it attracts is amazing and it's great to see your work in so many big media outlets. Plus, competing for a title such as UPY for



'The Gauntlet'

*Winner Underwater Photographer of the Year,
British Underwater Photographer of the Year,
Behaviour category UPY 2019. Author: Richard Barnden*

a year is pretty fun in itself....I am hoping none of you guys are entering!

Shane Gross:

Sorry Richard, I too shall enter! Not that you should be worried! I make a point of entering certain competitions like UPY and WPY every year, even if I don't feel like it's going to be a winning year. It keeps me engaged with the community and I learn something even when I don't win...which is most of the time.

This year, I have been lucky enough to spend a lot of time in the water in the Bahamas and Canada and even squeaked out some images I like. Will the judges like them, who knows, but I am looking forward to finding out. I like this competition in particular because it's easy and fun to enter,

I have a ton of respect for the judges and the judging process, and they add a few extra touches like letting us know how far in the judging



'Seahorse Density'

Winner Macro category UPY 2018. Author: Shane Gross

process each of our images made it. I really appreciate that.

In past years the prizes were added incentive. I won a diving trip to Crystal Blue resort in the Philippines and while I was there I shot a wonderpus image which made the cover of BBC Wildlife Magazine and, more importantly, I just really like it and am grateful for the experience. That would not have happened if it weren't for this competition.

This year there are no prizes, but I'm still entering as I feel it is good for the industry to keep plugging away during a shitty pandemic year.

The main reason I enter is it gets you real, honest feedback on your images. That is why I am stoked about this Shot Chat and about the competition.

Anita Kainrath:

Will I enter this year? Nope. I don't think so. I didn't take many pictures this year and it's been a crazy year so I didn't really think about entering. Well, I haven't thought of it until yesterday when Shane texted that there are still 3 weeks left to enter UPY. Ughhhh.. pressure! I might look through my image archive again.

I have to admit I wasn't doing



'Lemon Shark Pups in Mangrove Nursery'

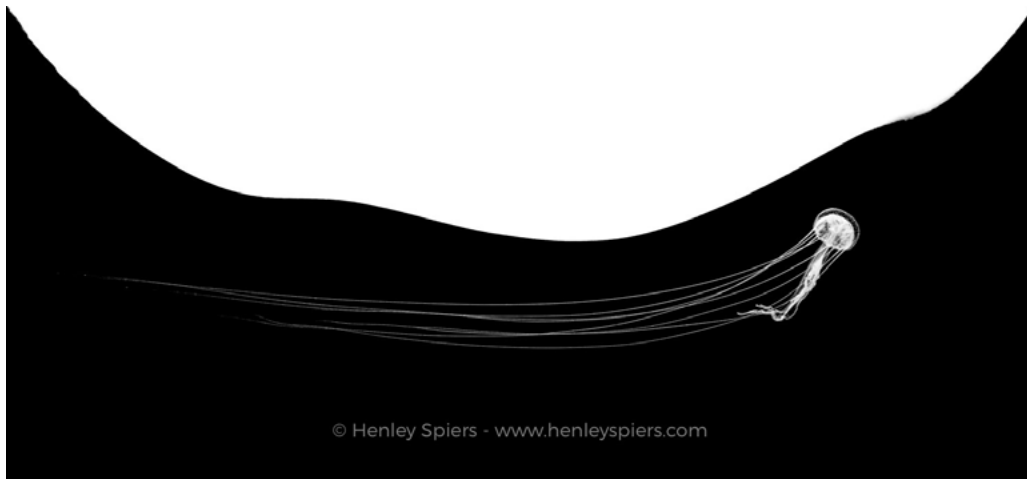
Winner Up & Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year, Winner Up & Coming category UPY 2020. Author: Anita Kainrath

my homework last year - I entered my images very, very close to the deadline (one day before I think) just to give it a try. (Thanks Shane! You were the one who told me to just give it a try) And boom. I got the UPY up & coming.. and THEN I noticed how much media attention it got. So entering in this competition is probably the best way to get your name out there as an underwater photographer.

The judges are amazing photographers and sitting hours in front of thousands of images to pick

out the very best. So much effort is going into this competition & I think it's a good way to motivate people to get out there and try for the best shots.

Our ocean needs good photographers to capture what's going on for those who are not as privileged to witness it in person. For people in a landlocked country, the ocean might be the once in a year highlight to get their feet wet in the summer. Showing them what's going on underwater is hopefully getting their attention and maybe a few will feel the urge to protect the ocean even more.



© Henley Spiers - www.henleyspiers.com

'Jellyfish Trails'

Highly Commended Black & White category UPY 2020.

Author: Henley Spiers

Henley Spiers:

Yes, I will definitely be entering and consider UPY the most prestigious underwater photography competition out there. It's a staple of the calendar and I look forward to entering every year, and seeing the winning collection as we head into the new year (and yes, hoping I pick up a result within it).

UPY stands out in terms of the standard of entries, rigorousness of the judging, and the noise it makes within our community, as well as the wider world. As mentioned, you can safely bet that most of the best underwater photographers will enter UPY, so you will get a good sense of how your images stand alongside your peers.

The judging panel is consistent

in terms of its composition, and they make a point to give themselves ample time to view and debate the images. The familiarity Alex Mustard, Peter Rowlands and Martin Edge have with one another allows them to disagree and engage in productive debate. It's something I hope we can mimic here on The Shot Chat too.

Whilst I don't agree with every result (you never will, that's the nature of competitions in a subjective discipline), I trust that every decision was well thought-out, and I am genuinely interested to see which shots they choose.

In terms of coverage, within underwater photography competitions, nothing compares. The results are consistently featured globally in



© Grant Thomas - www.grantthomasphotography.com

'Love Birds' I

Winner British Underwater Photographer of the Year, Winner British Wide Angle category UPY 2018. Author: Grant Thomas

the international press on a really impressive scale. On a more personal note, this hasn't been my wettest year on record, in large part due to the pandemic, but also as we welcomed our second baby daughter into the world, and relocated to a new country. I did manage a few overseas shoots, and some local diving too, so I feel like I have some fresh content to submit, as well as a couple of slow-burners from the archives.

Grant Thomas:

I completely agree with everyone's comments about UPY. It's the one competition that I look forward to every year as it brings together all the best u/w photographers in the world, not just the entrants but also the judges too! The feedback you get is invaluable and really shows where you stack up against the top notch shooters. For me UPY holds a particularly special place in my heart, as it's the first competition I ever won anything, and to this day I still owe a lot of my

photographic career (if you can call it that) to that first win due to the amazing publicity they generate.

Like you guys, I didn't generate much "fresh" content this year however, i think the entire u/w photography community is probably feeling the same, so i imagine it's still a relatively level playing field and still worth entering anything you have Anita!

Jade Hoksbergen:

I really enjoy UPY... it was the first competition I was ever awarded in (which came as a big surprise) so I share a similar fondness to Grant in that respect, although I haven't been as successful as him! Entering this year is going to be tricky though...

2020 has been a rather dry year for me for reasons similar to you guys but also because I was pregnant for the first half and the second half has seen me with a very cute, albeit needy baby.

During this dry spell, I've been pouring my efforts into painting instead, where the ocean theme still reigns. I'll see if I can dig up some older images from the archives, but I may be competing vicariously through you guys this year!

What would you say is the type of photo which tends to do well in UPY? And what are you anticipating from the 2021 edition?

Shane Gross:

It's a great question, and something I should have brought up earlier.

I think this competition, more than any other underwater comp, respects and awards a very wide range of underwater images and techniques. From the simple and beautiful to the technically complex 16 off-camera strobe shots, to fashion, wildlife, wrecks, scenics, behaviour, portraits, etc.

The judges have deep knowledge of the history of uw photography and know when an image is fresh, original and beautifully done.

Henley Spiers:

Yes, originality is definitely key. Every jury of every competition will lay claim to valuing originality, but there is a difference between something which is truly new, and something which you personally are seeing for the first time.

Between the decades of experience on the UPY judging table, and Alex Mustard's involvement judging other contests in the underwater / wildlife / nature spheres,



'Medusa Blenny on the Lookout'

Highly Commended Up & Coming category UPY 2017. Author: Jade Hoksbergen

and Alex's active involvement with social media and all the imagery which gets posted there, I am confident that the UPY judges actually know when something is different.

There are opportunities for well executed shots of familiar underwater subjects doing well in other contests, especially those which are not purely underwater, but in UPY they will have to be really exceptional to avoid the 'seen it before' reject pile.

On final decisions, they will tend to make the bold, rather than the traditional choice, witness the winners of the portrait and black and white

category last year. I think as Alex and Martin have spent a lot of time teaching underwater photography, they also really value technical mastery and are absolute sticklers for details. You will not get a pass on an otherwise beautiful image where the eye of the subject is just slightly off from perfect sharpness (so don't even bother entering it - I know, heartbreak).

This is also a competition which will value the sheer bloody-minded effort and ingenuity of an underwater photographer on the technical side. If you can blend originality and

technical innovation, you have a good chance of being on a winning track in UPY. Of course, there is no exact formula to a winning entry, but these are themes to be aware of.

As far as this year, I expect entries will likely come close to matching last year in both quality and volume, despite people spending less time in the water shooting. Everyone has had an opportunity to go through their back catalogue, and in the digital era, that is a substantial library of images.

As a trend-setting competition, I think we will not see an abundance of blackwater images succeeding, the judges will only want to reward the really novel blackwater images, and will be looking for something new, outside of that very fashionable area of underwater photography. I also think the British categories will be absolutely stacked this year as the pandemic has pushed more people to dive and appreciate their local waters.

Richard Barnden:

Totally agree with all of your comments, I think we all are lucky enough to dive so much that it really takes something special to grab your attention. I always try and think from the judges point of view going through thousands of images to have something that stands out. You have maybe five seconds on the first round

to grab their attention.

Of course very rare or never seen things before make you stop. But as you mentioned, it also has to be technically perfect or it might get past round one but struggle on later rounds which makes it very hard I think to capture rare stuff technically well.

So the images for me that do really well are the common things we see every dive, except shot completely uniquely. Most of my photography would however fall into the first category, which is normally spawning action or rare behaviour and getting right in the middle of it hoping for the best....Hmmm not sure what to expect really from this years UPY, I know I will be excited like every year to see the results and if I am extremely lucky (although doubtful this year), be a small part of it.

When I see some photographers images on social media I have a good idea who might do well. For instance, Greg Lecoer's images last year, I am sure we all knew would be a very strong contender to win a lot, but this year could see something different.

I also think Henley is right and the British categories will be full of nice images, which I am excited to see. I actually secretly would like to see a UK photo win overall. Unfortunately, I don't have any UK images worth entering so I need to change that over the next few years.



'Blue Shark in Motion'

Commended British Wide Angle category UPY 2020. Author: Henley Spiers

How do you choose which images to enter into UPY?

Anita Kainrath:

Hmmm.. I would look at last years winners and I will probably have an idea of which category I would like to enter (and try to go for pictures with different animals/seascapes). I usually go through my most memorable photo-series, pick out 10 pictures I like in terms of composition, and I look for images I don't need to crop or edit too much. Just minor stuff like dust particles and

white balance. Then I would take a look at the chosen images a few days later and usually I can eliminate a few again. Once I'm down to three or four images I ask a second opinion of another photographer or friends with a sense for art or photography who can give me their honest objective opinion. Sometimes I agree with their opinion but my gut usually tells me which image I end up picking.

Jade Hoksbergen:

Before I make any selections, I like to sit down and physically flick through the books we have in our library — those that showcase wildlife or underwater imagery. I like to remind myself what kind of image is compelling to me, and try to dissect why that is so... this gets me into the right mental zone when selecting my own images.

When choosing my images, I try to not let the HOW affect my selection, in other words I try to forget the degree of challenge that needed to be overcome in order to get the shot. I find myself always emotionally attached to those that required a lot of perseverance and experimentation, and sometimes I find that it clouds my judgement.

At the end of the day, when a viewer looks at your image, he/she will not see how you've had to hover in an acrobatic /near-impossible fashion to get the shot, or how you've had to acquire superhero stamina to fin against the current whilst shooting a subject the size of a rice grain... it's hard to tell you which kind of images I tend to go for, I suppose it's about going with your gut instincts. But one thing is for sure, if it requires a lot of alteration and editing to be "great", it will not make the cut.

I don't try to predict what the judges might or might not like, I

just go with what I think are strong images, images I would be proud of if they did do well in the competition. But who knows, perhaps it's time I change my strategy a little...

Shane Gross:

Interesting to hear that Anita and Jade! I wish I had some intellectual explanation for why I choose my images, but to be honest, I really just feel these are my best shots and I go ahead and enter them.

Maybe there is a bit of nuance when it comes to say, okay wpy has strict rules about feeding or baiting so any images from Tiger beach or whatever are out, or strict rules about removing backscatter vs another comp that is more of an art contest...but generally, I really just put what I like in and hope for the best. Maybe I'd be more successful if I invested more time into it, but I want it to be fun and I try to not take it too seriously.

I don't know how many times I've done a portfolio review with someone I really admire and they say the exact opposite about image x compared to what someone else I really admire said last week. It's so subjective. So, my attitude is to have some fun and be grateful when I win and not be crushed when I don't. Unless I lose to Henley...in that scenario I get a tub of ice cream, cry, and question the universe.



'Turtle & Friends'

Highly Commended Behaviour category UPY 2020. Author: Henley Spiers

I should clarify that I very much value the opinion of those people who gave me portfolio reviews and learned a ton! I really believe 1 hour of that is worth more than 50 hours of reading online articles about underwater photography. For WPY this year I sent 10ish of my images to Anita and I know my entry is stronger because of her feedback.

Henley Spiers:

That was truly heartwarming Shane, especially that bit about the ice cream. Now at the risk of exposing

what an uncool, try-hard I really am, here's my process...

I think of images as having a 1 year competitive life cycle, and that starts around mid December, with the deadline for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year, followed soon after by UPY. These are probably the contests I value most, and WPY has a specific rule regarding eligibility of images which have been previously awarded. UPY doesn't have such a rule, but I do think you lose a few brownie points there if they know the shot has been awarded elsewhere.

What I'm trying to avoid, is losing the opportunity to enter my favourite shots in UPY and WPY, because they were awarded in something else a few months earlier.

From January onwards, other deadlines will loom for other contests, but your images should still be eligible for entry into those. This strategy means if I shoot something good in January, I will hold it back until December...patience is key!

Knowing if a shot is good for competition is a combination of my own personal feelings about it, knowledge of prior competition-winning imagery, and feedback from outside.

Sometimes, very rarely, but sometimes, you just know...or you think you do...that a shot is competition worthy. More often, you are not sure...you think maybe it is.

I keep the UPY yearbooks on my phone and enjoy browsing them when I am stuck somewhere with no connection and nothing else to do (usually during travel time). I'd recommend it as you will be familiar with what has worked in the past (both as a general level/type of image, and as something not to copy exactly), and you will build up your understanding of each category.

I also am a fan of buying up cheap, second hand, old WPY portfolios...again, building up a

mental database of inspiration within award-winning imagery.

Lastly, I do seek some external feedback, but you need to be careful about that. I quite enjoy flipping out a shot I'm excited about with non-underwater photographers, just to gauge their reaction (on the basis that a truly outstanding image should have universal appeal), I'll also share with friends and family (but this is one to be extra wary about...I can only dream of the day my mum makes it onto the WPY judging panel, I'll be cleaning up that year), and finally, and most importantly, I have a daily discourse with Jade about images, both our own and others.

Hers is the instinct I trust most when it comes to evaluation, but even then there will be moments we disagree...Sometimes I enter a shot despite everyone saying they're not sure, just for the peace of mind of knowing it would or wouldn't win! (you have now accessed the weirdo points multiplier)

Anita Kainrath:

Yeah..I know the feeling. Sometimes we're not sure about a shot but that makes it also exciting. The photographer I'm asking for an opinion before I ask anyone else is of course Shane. I know I can trust him - he's honest & knows what works in an image. Thank you Shane!!



'Tiger Wave'

3rd Place in the Macro category UPY 2019. Author: Henley Spiers

Shane Gross:

I do get enjoyment out of telling you when an image sucks...so keep 'em coming!

Richard Barnden:

Honestly speaking I try and do the same as Anita and Jade. I have a look at the previous winners and see what has been working or what I might have that has not been used before but the real truth is that the only shots where I can really compete at UPY level is in the Behaviour category.

I would say 90% of my photography is spent chasing horny fish around or trying to work out when they will get it on so I already know what limited shots I will have. Throughout the year, I will have a good idea which ten or so shots will be my best spawning shots or behaviour shots and then maybe work a little on how I might edit them better.

I think the main problem I have is my own personal relationship with some images I took which has to be left out of competitions. It's only if

you get into the winning round you can let people know how hard it was to get that shot. Like the spawning grouper at night shot in Palau. It took me about 5 years to get that shot and it only really means something to someone who knows about fish or spent the last five years at night with me waiting for it, otherwise it does not look that impressive.

So I try and get my best images and let my wife (Siqui) choose. That way if I don't win anything I can always blame her.

Also when I was living in Palau I had about 5 or 6 images throughout the year that would be in my head that I always wanted to capture. Things like super close up bumphead spawning shot right in my face. Of course 99% of the time I wouldn't come close but I think it's important to have an idea of your perfect capture so that way you can work towards it.

Maybe it was not the right lens or maybe the shot is so hard you might only get one chance in 100 but the fact is you still have the thought or the idea and something you can work towards...

This year I have been scrambling through any old images in a hope that I may have missed something or maybe I could edit some better....

As competitions go I will always try and enter both UPY and WPY and try and save my best images for those

competitions. As you all get to know me better I generally do things arse about face or back to front.

So I look at UPY as the first competition of the season that I really want to enter.

I wish I was as organised as Henley...He seems to be militant with his entries and probably why he does so well, but I unfortunately leave mine to the last minute. I think secretly I am always hoping I will get something special right up to the day before but alas I have to revert to my already taken ones.

Grant Thomas:

I had some bad luck my first year with my swan image and another. When I first started shooting I used to always convert my files to DNG as I had an issue with one of my programs recognising CR2 files. I somehow managed to lose my original RAW and therefore my images were disqualified from WPY! I'm still bitter about it.

My process when entering competitions is very much similar to that of Richard and Henley, in that I usually save most of my stronger images for UPY and WPY at the end of the year.

I have an Excel spreadsheet with all the deadlines and will usually wait until nearer the deadline date to enter, as to give myself time to go



'Constellation of Eagle Rays'

Runner-up Black & White category UPY 2020. Author: Henley Spiers

back and review images over and over again, possibly making small processing adjustments and getting "constructive" feedback from multiple "reliable" sources.

I also always think I might capture something magical in the final hour and decide to enter that instead... Not happened yet but I'm always hopeful.

I am a true believer that the process of entering photo competitions is an art form in itself. Each competition definitely has a type of image which they like to favour.

When it comes to actually selecting images to enter into each competition i take a very logical approach, trying to minimise my emotional connection to images as much as possible, and put myself in the judges shoes.

I look at previous years winner, trying spot any patterns or styles they seem to favour and also try not to enter images which are the same as a previous winner.

However, there are times where competitions such as WPY offer a generous selection of 25 entries for a

fixed fee and i don't know about you guys but I don't tend to have 25 super awesome unique world class images to enter each year. Therefore I will usually include a couple of "random" shots which i feel are bordering on so unique that they could be classed as rubbish, as you never know - one person's rubbish could be another's treasure.

Shane Gross:

Yeah I remember one WPY winner saying the image that won for him was his 25th pick and he was close to not including it because it was so weird.

Henley Spiers:

Yes! It's nice to have the room for those 'random' or 'peace of mind' entries...and I actually wish UPY had 25 rather than 20 entries for that reason...a good photographer is not necessarily a good editor, so if I was organising a competition I'd rather leave plenty of room for photographers to send a selection, even if it meant more sifting during the judging.

What happened after you won in UPY?

Anita Kainrath:

Honestly. It took me over one week to realize it. I couldn't believe it. Until it got so much media attention and people from all over the world - friends who I haven't told about it from the other side of the world congratulated me. That's when I knew it really happened. I didn't expect to win.

Competitions were always Shane's thing and I admired him for his excellent photo-work. I didn't think my images would be good enough for competitions so I just never tried. Shane finally convinced me to enter some of my images so I set my doubts aside, entered a few pictures and tried to not think about it. Then I got the e-mail from Alex. I thought I wasn't reading right & I remember I had to go for a walk and then read the e-mail again and again. It was surreal.

I feel very honoured that they chose my image. Hearing top photographers like Alex Mustard, Peter Rowlands & Martin Edge comment on my picture means so much to me and it motivates me to shoot more in the future.

So even though it's hard for me to take pictures right now, due to various reasons (plus the pandemic), I



'Battle of the Tompots'

Winner British Macro category UPY 2018.

Author: Henley Spiers

will pick up on it as soon as I can and I'll try to get even better. Although the pressure is up now.

There are so many great photographers out there and to beat them is almost impossible. For myself though I know now, I'm on the right path in terms of photography.

Henley Spiers:

Winning in UPY is one of the few times my friends and family come across my work without me shoving it down their throat. The media coverage is such that winning images will

circulate on pretty much every major news outlet.

The first time I won, in 2018 with the 'Battle of the Tompots', I had friends messaging me they had seen my name on the BBC, and the Sunday Times picked it up as their photo of the week, so that was very cool and it's not a level of coverage I have experienced with any other underwater photo competition.

Winning and then coming second in the black and white categories in 2019 and 2020 yielded a fair amount of print enquiries - I think the black

and white category is well suited for wall art but would be interested to hear if you guys had print enquiries too on the back of a UPY result? I certainly didn't get people asking for prints of the tompots!

Jade Hoksbergen:

I've not had the same level of success in UPY as you all, you guys are awesome, but here's my experience for what it's worth...

Unlike other competitions where it seems that you need to be ma category winner at least in order to get any press coverage, even a highly commended image from UPY would get media attention.

I was very pleasantly surprised to be contacted by New Scientist after my result in UPY 2017. They ended up buying one of my images for a double page spread — I was chuffed. Ran into WHSmith when it was out... and stared at the spread with a big grin on my face...

Shane Gross:

It's interesting to think back. I don't have many specific memories. That whole year is sort of a blur. I try to not take this stuff too personally, but I'm grateful it gave me a bit of a soapbox to talk about the seahorse pond. That pond is still not fully protected, but I think once the covid situation is more under control the

government will follow through. We are very close.

Winning in these comps and drawing attention to the issue puts that tiny bit more pressure on the government and when an NGO needs an image to talk about that issue, I'm proud they come to me, sometimes finding the image through UPY. The scientists working in the pond are also proud of the image and have used it a lot over the years.

Richard Barnden:

Well winning UPY 2019 was a massive shock for me..Quite like what Anita said I had to read and re-read the email five times. I of course remember that day very well. I had been waking up really early for the last five or so days for a couple of reasons.

One was that I was getting married, we had already tied the knot in California but both of our parents' families were in Palau and I was freaking out about the usual pre marriage stuff like have we got this organised and that etc. And because I was really excited about UPY.

The difference with UPY judging is that it's all done on one weekend sit down.

As I was checking my emails I saw I had one from UPY saying congratulations you are a winner. But the email said that my image had been



selected for the winning round so I was obviously quite happy but not like I was about to be.

When I finished reading it I saw there was another email from UPY saying congratulations again and at first I thought it was a mistake, like a double send or something. So I waited a few mins to open it, made my coffee and relaxed a bit.

I am glad I opened it and not deleted it because my reaction was priceless. When I read congratulations you have won Underwater Photographer of the Year I was bouncing up and down on the bed shouting I did it..... I did it. Then when I read British as well there was more bouncing. Siqi was practically thrown out of bed and I continued bouncing around the room.

The hardest part is not being

able to tell anyone you have won. You can tell close friends and family but Palau is a small place. So if I had told anyone the secret would have been out. I am terrible at keeping secrets anyway and so I just thought it best not to tell anyone except my parents. It was hard for a blabber mouth.

Once the results came out, the emails started flowing in. I was a little unprepared for this part actually. I was still running a lot of expeditions and so had limited time but I still managed to answer everything and tried to make the most of this lucky opportunity.

One of the highlights was being on BBC South Today. They had asked for an interview and being on island time I was expecting the interview the following day but oh no they wanted it NOW. Well I promised myself I

would not turn down any opportunity that came and so after a few celebratory drinks (I think it was 2am for me) armed with a mop to hold up the mic, I managed to put something together.

There was also a lot of diving magazine interviews but also non diving related publications asking for interviews or stories which come from UPY. I felt that I may have been known in the diving community for my work in Palau or maybe my photography but UPY helps you get to that next level of mainstream media, something I would have never really been able to achieve myself.

If I had to pick one single thing that was the most beneficial thing for me from UPY it would have to be working with Greenpeace. That was a month project working with some amazing people and diving such a remote places on the planet. This did not come directly from UPY but I am sure when they were looking for a photographer it would have definitely helped in my selection. They did need other skills like rebreather experienced etc but the point isit generated the point of contact.

I also loved the UPY prize, diving with Agulhas House and reef on Aliwal shoals was amazing. Brett and his team looked after me very well. I also had some really nice resorts ask me to join for a week and

do some presentations. Some of the shoots I did not get but it put me in the position of getting more work that I might have otherwise.

All in all I tried to make the most out of the very lucky opportunity. Every email that came in I replied to and like I mentioned I didn't always get the shoot but I tried. I know there is a very small if not impossible chance of repeating winning UPY so I wanted to make sure I did not take it for granted or let the opportunity slip away.

That wave has slowed right down now and although maybe a slight pressure to do well in future competitions I try not to let it get in the way of why I wanted to start entering comps in the first place and thats because it's fun.....The excitement it creates waking up in the morning and checking your emails to see if you got anywhere. The fun of competing. I will always remember that feeling and hope one day I get another taste of it...Just a little taste is all I ask.....LOL

Grant Thomas:

I had a very similar story to that of Richard after winning British UPY. I was living in New Zealand at the time so pretty much the opposite time zone to the UK. I had never won any photo competition before and had only been shooting underwater

for around a year, so never really expected any success.

I remember waking up to an email from Peter Rowlands telling me I had won British UPY and I honestly thought there had been some sort of mistake. After re-reading and checking that indeed the email had been addressed to me I literally jumped out of bed and started shouting "I bloody won". I think Aneesh just about had a heart attack next to me!

Like you all have said, the media coverage and publicity from UPY is tremendous.

It really took me by surprise when I saw my image popping up in newspapers in New Zealand and then I started getting emails from the BBC and STV asking for interviews.

At first I was quite taken aback by all the attention! I remember being super nervous when I had my first live interview with STV and like Richard it ended up being at around 2am due to the time difference. To calm the nerves I decided to have a gin or two or three... it's fair to say I actually don't remember much of that interview!

I owe a lot to UPY and that first win, as it really kick started my photographic journey that I'm on now. Not only did it project my name into the UW photo community, which made getting work a lot easier, it also



'Between Two Worlds'
Winner Black & White category UPY 2019. Author: Henley Spiers

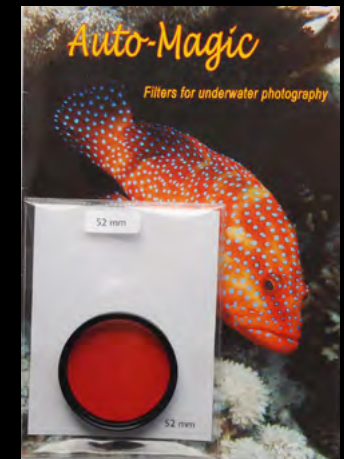
gave me the confidence to pursue my passion as a career.

We hope you enjoyed this Special Edition of The Shot Chat, if you're now excited to take part in the Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021, just click the link below.

THE DEADLINE IS JAN 5TH so get your skates on :-)



We've got you covered!



Magic filters are now available in 3 options. Original Magic for use in blue water with DSLR and compact cameras with Manual White Balance, Auto-Magic for compact cameras in automatic point and shoot mode. GreenWater Magic for use in green water with DSLR and compact cameras with Manual White Balance. Prices start at just £22.

The Auto-Magic formula is now available in a Plexiglass filter that can be added or removed underwater.

www.magic-filters.com