

Editorial

Things aren't what they used to be

Compact digital cameras are/were ideally suited to capture stills or video. The light information falling on the sensor is either recorded as an instant or a series of instants which become a moving image. Sadly the development of these cameras has not received the investment needed as smartphones became ever more capable and even more portable.

The traditional SLR however, which became the digital DSLR, was designed purely to capture still images and it had to be modified considerably both mechanically and electronically, to capture video. The early results were a fudge and lagged well behind dedicated video cameras but nowadays they do a pretty decent job; especially the Panasonic GH range.

Just as the smartphone toppled the compact, now the mirrorless design is undermining the dominance of the DSLR market and looks likely to be the saviour of the serious photography industry.

The good news is that the investment, which was denied to compacts, is now being ploughed into mirrorless cameras and they are now

class leading video cameras as well as top quality stills machines. Notice I just said machines because that's what I think they have become and I'm OK with that. What concerns me is that the ergonomics has gone out of the window - the whole handling of an SLR was so you could adjust the camera's controls without taking your eye away from the optical viewfinder.

Nowadays we have the EVF and the LCD screen and the ergonomics can never get both right. We are, however, for once fortunate as underwater photographers because the housing manufacturers can improve the ergonomics and they certainly have done for DSLRs.

Many moons ago I bleated on that, ergonomically, there should be two designs of underwater housings - one for stills shooters and another for videographers (I'm not keen on that word, by the way) and I feel that the time is right to bleat again because these mirrorless cameras have become primarily amazing video machines so the housing designs could dictate whether they handle as stills or video machines in order to get the most enjoyable and productive performance out of them.

Now I know it will never happen because I accept it would

be uneconomic but I know that the concept is ergonomically well founded. My final point that most metal housings are machined one by one so why couldn't there be two designs?

Here's hoping.

Smartphones designs

The unique Divevolk housings for smartphones are quite literally amazing and certainly ground breaking pieces of kit.

They have a flexible and pressure compensated membrane which mimics the touch of a finger on the smartphone screen; the result is just like you use your smartphone camera on land with the added benefit of being able to access all the apps you have to while away those decompression stops reading a book or playing Solitaire.

The other advantage they have is their accessory lens holder - its position can be adjusted depending on the lens you are using on the phone as some have as many as three lenses in different positions. This isn't critical with a flat port but the phone's wide angle lens quality is improved with a dedicated dome port - the position and design of which is important.

Amazing though the Divevolk

housing is, the appeal of a smartphone to a serious underwater photographer will only start when a manufacturer starts to take the smartphone seriously and produce a ground up housing with quality optics and ergonomics in mind.

You may say I'm a dreamer but I can't be the only one.

Please don't forget your backyard

How short is our memory when it suits and judging by the reports of dive trips, photo workshops and expeditions it's full blown amnesia but please don't forget how much your backyard still has to offer.

Not too long ago it was a godsend, a mental healer and even an surprising inspiration; that inspiration came from taking time to observe what you usually swam (or even worse, flew) past; to see and experience how life lives in the slow lane and it's still fascinating.

Success by the inch is a cinch. Success by the yard is hard.

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