Editorial

I blame Nikon

This isn't as serious as it sounds but, the truth is, they started it.

The 'It' I'm referring to was the introduction of the ground breaking 15mm UW Nikkor lens back in the 1970s. A very wide angle, rectilinear, water corrected lens; it produced exceptionally sharp results and covered 90°.

'So what's the big deal?' I hear those remotely interested, asking. Well, the point is that a coverage of 90° on a 35mm format should really be 20mm and not 15. I can only guess that their thinking was that the 'in air' coverage equated to 15mm but, surely, for a lens that was designed for use in water, it should really be a 20mm.

This was further compounded when the 180° full frame fisheye was nominated as a 16mm!

Regardless of the theoretical reasons for this nomenclature, my point is this; the only specification that communicates reality, and I have banged on about this before, is the angle of coverage; and, if I may be pedantic, preferably horizontal rather than diagonal. That single numerical figure tells me all I need to know.

The ray at the end of the tunnel for me was when I saw Nauticam's new EMWL lens system which is available in four versions - 60°, 100°, 130° and 160°. Sorted.

Sony Alpha 7 series

There can be no doubt that the Sony Alpha 7 series of cameras has changed the game both above and below water.

In just eight years since it was launched in 2014, it has almost single handedly twisted the knife on the DSLR market; but, in hindsight, it was always going to happen. Unlike conventional film, the image sensor doesn't need a 'flipping' mirror so doing away with a significant amount of complicated mechanics and helping increase the frames per second rate.

The specs just get better and better with each model and that's where my admiration fades for two reasons: they are very expensive and there have been nearly a dozen models in just eight years so you know, as soon as you buy one, there will definitely be a better model coming out in less than a year.

This also creates a problem for UwP and its reader for no sooner do we get time to include Jim Decker of Backscatter's excellent review of the A7 IV than Sony announce the V!

I guess that's the price of progress.

A battery-free, wireless underwater camera

As you can read in this issue, those impressive engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have built a battery-free, wireless underwater camera and I think that's worth repeating - a battery-free, wireless underwater camera.

The camera is powered by sound. It converts the mechanical energy from sound waves traveling through water into electrical energy that powers the camera's imaging and communications equipment. And, as if that weren't enough, after recording and encoding image data, the camera then uses sound waves to transmit the data through water to a receiver, which then reconstructs the image.

The implications for long term, remote monitoring underwater are obvious and I'm sure that, with development, the capability and quality will prove even more useful.

A battery-free, wireless underwater camera has made science fiction become reality.

Nauticam lenses

Many issues ago I highlighted and praised Nauticam for their development and production of top quality water contact optics such as the WWL-1 as well as their CMC and SMC macro lenses.

Since then, they, and in particular their founder Edward Lai, have not rested on their laurels but have continued to innovate with new, ever specialist, water contact optics.

Back in the mists of time it was the humble dome port which improved the quality of wide angle underwater images but they were, in essence, a catch all design; but they were far better than a flat port.

It was only by becoming more focused (pun intended) that underwater optics could be improved and that is where the very clever Mr Lai came in. He went right back to basics and designed whole optical systems with the sole purpose of producing flawless performance from edge to edge.

The result is that his dedicated work has produced lenses which are, quite literally, changing the way the underwater world is portrayed so, for that reason, he is a true modern pioneer and I salute him.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com
www.uwpmag.com