

Rick Ayrton's excellent and informative article on photographing shipwrecks in British waters is also a fascinating history of digital underwater photography; and in particular how one of the most significant, and for us most beneficial, developments has been the increase in ISO speed and quality.

I'm not going to side track the issue and ask whatever happened to ASA because I'm sure most UwP readers would look at me quizzically but Rick's superb images are a testament as to how far the image quality has been developed when shooting at high ISO settings.

Traditional film speeds started at 25 ISO and went up to the dizzy heights of 400 (Remember Kodak Tri X Black and white?). The early digital SLR cameras offered up to 500 ISO maximum for starters and it wasn't long before the speeds had three noughts on the end and needed a comma separator.

With each new flagship DSLR came an increased number until nowadays 20,000 ISO is not uncommon and the quality is very impressive.

25 to 20,000 is just under 10 stops speed increase. No wonder the deep wreck photographers have to keep upgrading their cameras!

AI

When I were a lad, AI stood for artificial insemination which was fairly new to the veterinary world in the 50s and 60s.

Now it has been taken over and renamed into what could be the start of a brave new world in all directions and at lightning speeds. There will be no side of life able to escape its effects whether good or bad if you believe what 'they' say.

The imaging world is often held up as an example of the benefits, and possibly even greater pitfalls, of this new visual capability. Being able to produce an image with just a written instruction sounds seismic so I asked ChatGPT to "Create an image of a coral reef underwater with a sunburst background".

ChatGPT replied (unbelievably instantly) "I'm sorry, but as a text-based AI model, I cannot create visual content such as images".

So maybe we're safe for a little while longer.

Topaz AI

I was introduced to this comparatively new image manipulation software by a fellow traveller who demonstrated its amazing capability to improve still images.

Now as a primarily 'video content creator' I checked if they did a video version and £177.41 later I had Topaz Video AI on my desktop and I think this will be a game changer on several levels and particularly for video. Here's why.

In addition to the obvious stabilisation, grain and motion blur settings I can 'upscale to 4k' or 'convert to 60fps' (or both!). Do you see where this is going? Does it mean I can still shoot on my small, cheap 1080p 30fps camcorder and end up with 4k 60fps?!!

Well the answer is yes and no. Upscaling to 4k is pretty impressive but I don't think it's quite as subtle as shooting in 4k originally; but converting to 60fps is much more impressive and produces buttery smooth playback by interpolation of an already high quality image.

4K 60fps cameras/camcorders tend to be considerably more expensive than 4k 30fps so you can

make significant savings or be able to carry on shooting with your existing 4k 30fps and convert it later.

True, you'll need a fast processor computer/laptop as even a few seconds can take several minutes to process but you only have to process your final output to the new quality.

Also the ability to 'freshen up' old analogue footage is a very pleasant experience indeed.

Frightened of AI for the imaging industry? As an end user I say, hell no. If this is what it can do, bring it on.

My Shot and Parting Shot

My apologies but there haven't been any contributions for these two regular slots so if you have an idea for either of these, we'd love to hear from you.

In the meantime, Happy New Year and may your pixels be perfect.

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