

When I were a lad zoom lenses were in their infancy and didn't offer the same optical quality from either a resolution or geometry point of view but the attraction was obviously there.

Over the years optical and mechanical developments saw designs make great strides until they are now, by and large, on a par with prime lenses.

The easiest and most popular designs were in the 28-70mm range and anything substantially wider had to wait for the arrival of computer aided designing, aspheric elements and low dispersion glass. But arrive they did and I guess the nirvana was the Tokina 10-17 f/3.5-4.5 which became the go to lens for most APS-C format shooters, offering 180° to 100° coverage - perfect for underwater photography. The domes they needed for underwater correction were not perfect but needs must.

Fast forward to the present day lenses from Nauticam and the zoom part is provided by a comparatively 'cheap and cheerful' kit lens and the really clever part is provided by the Nauticam glass and designs.

Their range of lenses is ground breaking and enable us to achieve a quality hitherto impossible.

It's hard to imagine what else we'll need.

Hybrid history

The arrival of the Backscatter Hybrid flash marks a turning point in the development of such products.

Early incarnations arrived over ten years ago when technology was much more basic and far less capable and the frankenstein like combinations felt bolted together rather than designed from scratch. The result was a product which certainly pricked interest but failed to provide the necessary performance and so fell by the wayside.

Fast forward to a world with high capacity batteries and capacitors, energy efficient LED lighting and computer aided design combined with manufacturers who had gained a wealth of experience and benefited from computer controlled machinery. The time was right to visit this genre of product and the result is the Backscatter Hybrid Flash.

Judging by the demand for all things new and shiny I suspect interest and orders for them will be brisk and provide a convenient combination for all forms of underwater imaging.

Happy hybridizing.

Editorial

Concentration

I always remember the late great Peter Scoones saying that he was unable to shoot stills and video on the same day or even over a period of several days.

This was mainly due to the mindset needed to think about either style of recording. Stills needed control over all aspects to bring them together into a single final image. Video needed almost three dimensional thinking to know how each sequence was going to work before and after; able to cut and grade together to move the story forward at the right pace without visual jarring.

Such sequences might, due to circumstances, be shot days apart so required a great deal of memory, concentration, skill and planning.

Whilst I can see the attraction of hybrid products capable of lighting both stills and video, I strongly suggest focusing (pun intended) on one discipline at a time otherwise you are unlikely get the best out of either of them.

Sometimes less is more.

Blackwater business

There can be no doubt that Blackwater diving and underwater photography have become very popular with extraordinary creatures migrating at night and providing fascinating subjects which have done very well in photo competitions.

Underwater photography at night is, at best, challenging but take away the seabed and you have the ultimate buoyancy test. Despite this, the blood thirsty media haven't leapt on any fatalities but I'm sure there have been some near misses over the years.

But whilst this is all very exciting and innovative, spare a thought for the poor dive resort who has quite suddenly been asked to provide diving facilities for almost 24 hours a day. They can't ask the same day staff and dive guides to 'stay on for a bit of overtime' so a fresh set of land and boat staff and specialist guides have to be hired for the shift that starts about 10pm and finishes about 3am.

I'm sure that there are surcharges for blackwater dives but I doubt if it really covers the true costs.

So next time you go blackwater diving, spare a thought and nod your cap in thanks to the resort :-). It has increased their workload significantly.

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