

Competitions

Another issue, another batch of competition entry dates, salivating prizes and stunning winning images.

I think it's fair to say that there are too many competitions in our world but, then again, it's supply and demand.

In the film era the quality of your images was mostly reflected by the amount of money people/companies were prepared to pay to use them. This, in a round about way, was a reflection of how good they were and, if you were a recipient, it was a double whammy. Lucre and likes.

Enter the digital era and the value of images has been decimated substantially by the sheer amount of them available, the ease of distribution and the high quality that modern cameras can produce in even the most modest of hands and let's not even start to think about AI.

The result was a shift in emphasis towards competitions where the lucre was replaced by prizes/cudos and the likes became position placings.

I think it's also fair to say that a significant percentage of top quality camera and housings system purchases in the non professional world are motivated by the desire to succeed in competitions and that's fine. Each to their own. It's certainly good for the manufacturer's business.

Editorial

The problem I have with all of this is that it results in a situation where underwater photographers are relying on other people i.e. judges (my goodself included) to let them know what level we think they are at and that is why Sandra Stalker's 'My Journey' article is so refreshing and should help keep things in perspective.

In it she credits competitions as the catalyst to try and take her images to a new level of creativity but in the process, and to use her own words:

"Most importantly though I do what I do for me and because I love it, all art and photography is incredibly subjective, what one person loves another will hate so I feel its really important to have masses of fun with what I do and primarily do it for me."

I think that is a very healthy approach to take; to avoid competitions distorting a sense of one's own images and influences why you take underwater images in the first place.

Competitions serve many purposes, absolutely no doubt, but they are not the be all and end all - win or lose.

RIP Martin Edge

I am sure you have already heard the sad news of Martin's passing and have read the many tributes paid to him from a wide spectrum of the international underwater photography community.

It made my heart swell to hear that I had been an influence on his early image making and he developed into an accomplished underwater photographer and, much more so, a mentor, yet he never left his grounding.

His passing marks the beginning of the end of one of the most exciting periods in underwater photography when truly original pioneers inspired the next generation in the film era who took the baton into the digital dawn and embraced all of its capabilities and potential. That same baton is now with a new generation who are already taking images to new and even more inspirational heights.

Through his books, workshops, one-to-one teachings and talks, Martin must have brought on more underwater photographers than almost anyone. Martin was an excellent image-maker in his own right; he was also able to impart,

enthuse and empower old and young alike.

He had the ability to debunk the technicalities which so many newcomers were daunted by and build their confidence to think more about their images rather than worry too much about the science. It was for this reason that he was so inspirational to so many and many of those have gone on to great success in underwater photography competitions.

It was as UPY judges that Alex Mustard had the idea to put Martin and I together in one room for a couple of intense but immensely enjoyable days judging the images for the Underwater Photographer of the Year Competition each year.

Here we had the chance to talk about our favourite subject – other people's underwater images – because, as men of a certain age and smelted in the film era, we had nothing to prove and everything to enjoy.

They were some of my most enjoyable days because of him.

My condolences to his wife Sylvia and family; he will be greatly missed in the underwater world but his legacy will last and help fill the void.

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