

Editorial

UPY 2026

Competitions may not be everyone's cup of coffee so if they are not for you, jog on; but for those who use them as a personal benchmark, UPY 2026 has once again shown that, without a shadow of a doubt, it is THE underwater photography competition.

The reasons for this are many and I make no apology for highlighting them shortly but cast your mind back to when UPY was reincarnated from the Brighton Film Festival back in 2015. At the time there were several well established competitions but they all followed the same established path - quite high entry fees per image, heavy prejudging by the organisers and online judging to name just three criticisms.

The situation was very similar to the iPhone when it entered an already saturated mobile phone market. It made no commercial sense to be the same and it was only by coming up with what was needed rather than what was possible that Apple, led by visionary Steve Jobs, literally changed the course of technology.

That is what UPY has done in the underwater photography competition world and, judging by the numbers of images entered from the number of underwater photographers worldwide, it has changed the game for all other competitions. But how?

Taking the three criticisms of existing competitions - quite high entry fees per image, heavy prejudging by the organisers and online, remote judging, UPY kept its entry fees reasonable, every single entered image is viewed by the judges and they physically meet over three days in January. That is because UPY treats the process as collaborative between entrants, judges and organisers. I hate quotes like "Produced by divers for divers" but UPY does the underwater photography competition version.

Respect the endeavours and treat them with integrity.

Finally there are two UPY features which set it way above the competition (pun intended) and the first is the Feedback system. All entrants can find out how far their

images progressed from the first round through to the finals. This is invaluable information which no other competition can provide.

The second feature is the Yearbook; a beautifully presented, downloadable and permanent record of the winning images, the photographer's back story and, another unique feature which I forgot to mention earlier, a judge's personal comment on each and every image. The result is a reference work of immense importance, a showcase of what images succeed and a reference work to help all aspiring entrants.

See you next year hopefully.

Constant light v strobes

Nigel Motyer's excellent and superbly illustrated article "Constant light v strobes" makes very interesting reading and, if the images are anything to go by, constant light looks like the way to go but I'll leave you to read the article, find out Nigel's conclusion and see how you take it from there.

Smartphones

If the UPY 2026 Smartphone category, sponsored by Divevolk, is anything to go by, the images they can produce, in the right hands, are here to stay. The range of the winning images shows that they are not just one trick, available light wide angle, ponies.

What is needed now, IMHO, is the hardware to make these 'cameras' better ergonomically and for underwater photographers to realise that these are very capable tools and you are not wasting photo opportunities by using 'just' a Smartphone.

The clue is in the first part of the name.

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