

Anything's possible

In a world where it's too easy to look at the bleak side these are very exciting times, certainly in terms of photography.

A couple of months ago, following a fortuitous conversation in a model helicopter shop, I was put in touch with a local guy who was into aerial photography. I was looking for an affordable way of filming from one boat to another from various angles.

I e mailed him but he was overseas 'flying' an ROV as part of the salvage of the Costa Concordia - the cruise ship which ran aground in the Mediterranean in 2012. On his return we met up and he gave me a demonstration of his octocopter; a flying platform powered by eight propellers under which was a separately controllable Canon SLR camera.

The result was a most impressive piece of kit and it got me to thinking that there are now no subjects that can't be filmed; everything is possible and from any angle albeit it at a cost of several thousand dollars.

Technical developments have now produced quadcopters for a few hundred dollars under which a GoPro camera can be mounted up to produce stunning aerial shots and Eric Cheng of Wetpixel and Lytro fame has been keeping us up to date on his particular

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progress in this fascinating world.

All of this got me thinking that the human element is being removed from the photographic process. No longer do you have to go to the ends of human endurance to get yourself into a precarious position to film the never before; you just send up a quadcopter to do it for you and that's fine because the image is king. How the image is captured is not the issue.

The same is true in our underwater world and has been for a long time. ROVs have been developed to go to any depth fitted with high definition cameras to capture images without us having to put a toe in the water. True, they are needed to go to depths below which we are physically unable to operate ourselves but, above those depths, isn't it much more enjoyable to actually go down there yourself, to experience the sensations both physically and visually and to compose the shots how you want them?

So whilst nowadays anything is possible remotely, sometimes it's more pleasurable to do it yourself and actually, in truth,, there are still some things that will never be possible. For example, try slamming a revolving door.

More and more complex

Photographically, I'm lazy.

I like things to be quick and easy; the result of an instinct to think that now's the best time to press the shutter and capture the image. That's why I love digital because it gives me the instant confirmation that I was either right or wrong.

I guess that's why I've nearly always used filters and available light. It's quick, easy, automatic and colourful. Sure the end results aren't as punchy as a strobe lit shot but I enjoy the simplicity which brings a feeling of freedom which, to me, equates to enjoyment.

I'm sure the New Products and Product Review sections are of major interest to a lot of UwP readers and, judging by some of the camera set ups I see uw photographers using, the promotion leads to sales for uw camera stores. Things that let you get closer and closer, wider and wider and brighter and brighter.

There are those within our midst who wouldn't be seen dead without dual strobes on multi-jointed arms fronted by macro lenses with additional diopetre lenses; and that's obviously fine but I guess my message is Never forget how little equipment you need to have a good time.

Specifications

I'm embarrassed to admit I've been measurebating a lot recently since I wrote my last Editorial about choosing my next camera.

Fortunately I think there is light at the end of the tunnel but it has been a fascinating and honest experience. It was also very reassuring to receive Martin Heyn's article on Digital Downsizing later in this issue where he describes his journey from SLR to 4/3rds without any feeling of loss.

My particular requirement centres on video output so I'm approaching it from a different angle to Martin but the reasoning is actually the same. What is the end product I want to achieve?

From a video point of view YouTube has become the industry standard in terms of output and marketing and the output required to fill a computer screen with sufficient optical quality to impress is, quite frankly, a doddle.

Even when the desired output is comparatively low it is difficult to make an informed judgement as to what camera will be the best without actually trying/using it so I'm renting several and will keep you informed.

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