Art filters

by Phil Rudin

Photographers have always pushed the limits of their craft using special effects filters, color gels, cross processing and other dark room techniques to enhance artistic and photographic expression. When photography went digital these techniques were carried over to the computer. Now we really on the digital darkroom using programs like Aperture, Lightroom, Photoshop and other postprocessing software for special effects enhancements. Once a RAW file is imported into the computer a preset processing effect like black and white or sepia can be chosen and applied to the RAW file to enhance the final look of the image. Photographers can also create presets of their own design and save them to be applied in post-processing. Several manufactures have now added these creative effects filters into the camera software allowing you to transform your photography into works of art in the camera.

With the camera set to capture RAW+JPEG only the JEPG image is processed with the art filter effect applied and the RAW file remains in tact so the original image data is preserved. Art filters allow the photographer to create an impressionistic view of reality and enhance the look of a given subject. Applying the filter effect with the exposure value at the time of capture is like exposing an image through an optical glass filter that has been attached to the lens. Unlike image editing software the photographer can immediately see the scene that is about to be captured on the LCD or in the electronic viewfinder. This allows for a more creativity and diversified array of potential image content. A verity of creative effects filters are available from just about every camera manufacturer and in all levels of cameras from DSLR's to consumer compacts. I will describe the Olympus offerings since all of the attached test photos were done with the Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera. Olympus was one of the first to introduce the "art filters" on its Olympus E-30 DSLR which offered six different stand alone filters. Olympus most recently released mirror-less camera the E-P5 now sports twelve art filters each with sub-settings (like color or B&W) and additional picture frame effects. Art filter bracketing can also be applied were several effects of your

M/V Nuria , Panasonic 7-14mm zoom at 7mm, Mode-P, F/11, 1/640th, ISO-200, A/V light, Key Lime filter.

choosing are applied to a single image with a snap of the camera shutter. The Olympus art filters include Pop Art, Soft Focus, Pale & light Color, Diorama, Key Lime, WaterColor, Light Tone, Grainy Film, Pin Hole, Dramatic Tone, Cross Process and Gentle Sepia. Several of these are variations of black and white and/or color. All of these art filters can also be applied to your video clips, in the photo story camera feature, to interval shooting and to the time lapse movies. In the bracketing mode you can chose the ART filter effects which best fit your shooting style and the shooting situation you are presented with on any given shoot.

Using the art filters with the Olympus E-M5 and the Nauticam NA-EM5 housing was a quite easy. Simply set the mode dial to ART and then use the up/down arrows on the super screen to pick the filter you want to use. The left/right arrows allow you to chose a sub-set of filters like using the dramatic tone filter in color or in black and white extending

the range of choices way beyond the twelve basic art filters. With each art filter you chose a sample image will show-up to the right of the super screen giving you an idea of how the filter effect will look in use. When you change one of the sub-sets the image changes to reflect how the new setting will appear, dramatic tone in color or in black & white. Once you have pushed the OK button to lock in your selection the effect will immediately appear both on the LCD and in the EVF. With Olympus when you chose an art filter the camera will be recording in the "P" mode (auto F-stop and shutter speed) and exposure changes can be made through changes in EV levels, ISO settings and flash level settings. The white balance setting can also be changed to meet your needs and I have chosen to shoot in auto white balance for this article. For the wide angle shots I chose to use the Panasonic 7-14mm zoom with the ZEN Underwater 170mm optical glass port and a 20mm port extension. I also used the Panasonic 8mm Fisheye with the ZEN Underwater Subal type III 100mm optical glass dome and a Zen to Nauticam Subal port adapter. With both of these lenses I was getting excellent exposures with ISO settings from 200 to 400 in Caribbean waters in depths of 5 to 45 meters. All images were taken using two Inon Z-240 strobes with Inon 4900K -0.5 stop diffusers using manual power level settings. For the shots macro I used the Olympus 60mm macro lens with the Nauticam 45 macro port and 20mm extension. Lighting was with two Inon Z-240 strobes without diffusers and the Athena ARF-01 ring flash. Since the camera defaults to the "P" mode when set to the ART filter setting you will see a change in your shooting style especially when shooting macro/closeup.

This is because even with the camera strobe

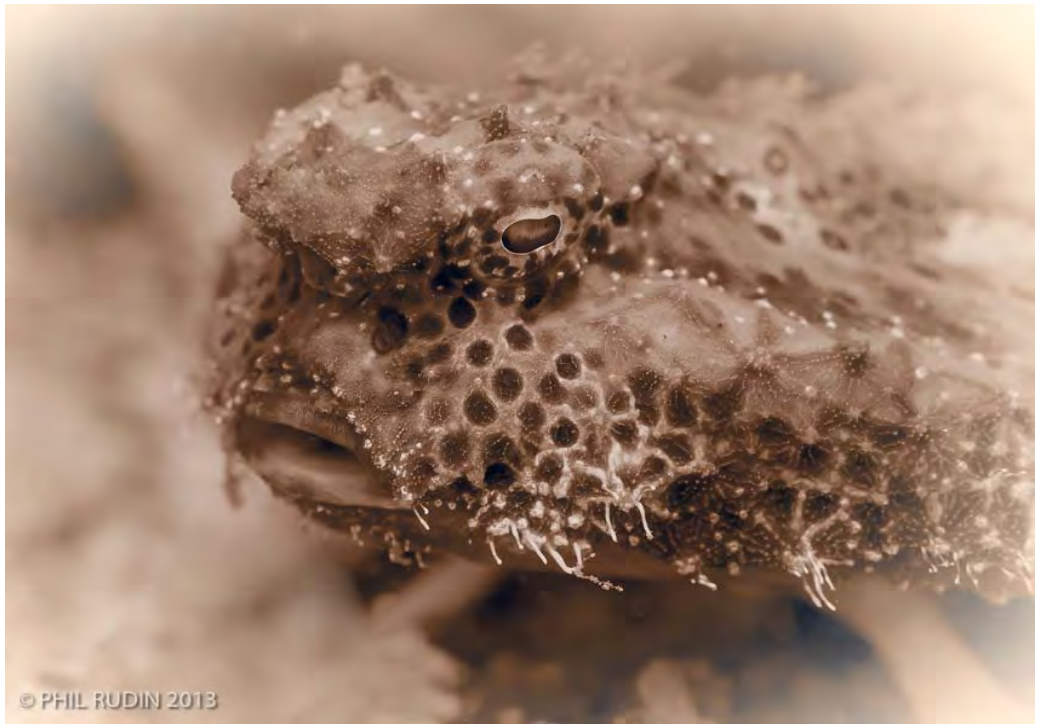
Schoolmaster's, Panasonic 7-14mm zoom at 8mm, Mode-P, F/4.5 ,1/50th, ISO-200, 2X Inon Z-240 strobes, Key Lime filter.

Queen Conch, Panasonic 7-14mm zoom at 9mm, Mode-P, F/9.0, 1/160th, ISO-200, 2X Inon Z-240 strobes, Key Lime filter.

Seaweed Blenny #1, Olympus 60mm macro, Mode-P, F/4.0, 1/80th, ISO-200, Athena Ring-Flash, Key Lime filter.

Seaweed Blenny #2, Olympus 60mm macro, Mode-P, F/4.0, 1/80th, ISO-200, Athena Ring-Flash, Dramatic Tone I filter.

Dusky Jawfish, Olympus 60mm macro, Mode-P, F/4.0, 1/50th, ISO-200, Athena Ring-Flash, Dramatic Tone II filter.



Polka-Dot Batfish, Olympus 60mm macro, Mode-P, F/4.0, 1/100th, ISO-200, Athena Ring-Flash, Gentle Sepia + White Edge effect.

and external strobes in use the "P" mode defaults to an available light setting. As a result I was seeing F/4 at 1/40th to 1/60th shooting ISO-200 in most of my macro shots with the 60mm macro lens. Even with the assist of a strong focusing light the settings did not change much and as a result depth of field was reduced. This is not as big an issue with

the small sensor cameras as it would be with the full frame 35mm sized sensors cameras. In fact I found the shallower DOF quit pleasing in many cases. With the wide angle shots using the 7-14 zoom and 8mm Fisheye I was getting F-stops in the F/4.5 to F/9 range and with the over/under shots F/11 to F/22 at ISO-200. I also found that filters like "Key Lime" which I found very cool for wide angle and over/under did not excite me as much while shooting macro/closeups. If you would like to play around with the ART filter effects on your current Olympus, RAW image collection you can download a free copy of Olympus Viewer 3 from your Olympus web site. Next open the program, pull down the PHOTO menu in the top tool bar and click on the RAW development bar, then open RAW 1 and pull down the Art Filter menu to select a filter effect. You can also apply the above process to wide angle and macro images where you want to shoot in modes other than "P" for a greater range of camera settings. While the Olympus Viewer post-processing system works well I found that being able to see the effect in real time through the EVF was the best way of unlocking this tool to if fullest advantage.

Art filters are a lot of fun to use both above and below water and they will add that extra pop to photo and travel presentations. I now try to shoot all of my workshop students with the Art filters because they find them to be such great trip souvenirs. So unlock the potential in your camera program and have some fun with Art filters.

Phil Rudin

Don't settle for 2nd best

Film - No Filter
No White Balance

Digital - No Filter
Manual WB

Magic Filter
Manual WB

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards.

These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

www.magic-filters.com