

Editorial

Retail

When I was in u/w photo retail from the mid 70's to 90's it was a different world.

In the early days of my era communications were nowhere near as quick as today; faxes were only just starting to replace written letters, envelopes and stamps. My customer's phone enquiries were nearly all from the UK and usually resulted in posting out a printed catalogue or a series of brochures for the customer to study at their leisure.

It all sounds so quaint now.

The market was so small that manufacturers dealt directly with specialist retailers like myself and there was no financial room nor business logic in having a distributor because there were so few retailers. In addition the manufacturers only communicated with these specialist retailers so they were the font of all knowledge about that particular manufacturer's products and their plans for new models.

The result was that customers came to such retailers for help, advice and specialist knowledge.

Nowadays it is totally different; knowledge, opinion and gossip are all available worldwide at the scroll of a

mouse, day or night. Manufacturers need to let the world know what they're working on to steal a march on their competitors so they let everyone know and the customer, with more time and motivation to surf, can often be more up to date than a retailer.

In addition the advent of online retail has proved to be a real threat to established, premises based, retailers whose overheads are eye watering by comparison and add to that the need to create and maintain a website and you have a whole new way of doing business.

A recent trend that I have noticed is that most major retailers worldwide now have to have a comprehensive library of information on their sites by way of tutorials or knowledge bases which, if collated, would end up being a most comprehensive book on u/w photography and that all costs.

And so it still comes down to knowledge and our long established retailers are, by and large, still more knowledgeable and have far more experience of a wide range of equipment than an individual could ever have. As a result they have a definite value in the purchasing process.

I know it's tempting to find the lowest price but sometimes value for money counts for a lot in u/w photography retail.

Backgrounds are the new foreground

I've said it before but u/w photography (and the retail trade) loves nothing more than a trend; top, back and underlighting, snoots, supermacro, fashion, filters and fluorescence to name but a few.

The video world is the same with a big one recently being 'shallow depth of field' which produces a 'film like' effect and is helped by using video cameras with larger sensors.

This trend has found its way into still images; yet for decades we were all desperate for AS MUCH depth of field as possible; especially for macro shots. Now, it seems, we want no more of it.

"Bokeh" has become the word to fool others into thinking you know what you're talking about. Terms like "That bokeh is beautiful" and "He/she has used bokeh so well" have people scurrying away to Googletown only to find out that it's just a fancy word for being out of focus. Quite nice out of focus, I grant you and, if well used, it can create a beautiful sense of isolation which, in a modern post film world, can only enhance what was already unknowingly there.

Discuss.

Great White Basking Sharks

All the signs are here again that, in the UK, the start of the 'wind Rowlands up' season has already begun with a vengeance and the Daily Star were first out of their putrid traps with

**Jaws attack:
Terror after GIANT SHARKS
spotted circling the coast of
England**

HOLIDAYMAKERS have been placed on alert as huge sharks hit British shores thanks to the recent hot weather.

Now I'm not going to mention the 'journalist' responsible in case she (that narrows it down a bit) slaps me with a legally wet haddock but suffice it to say it was the usual conscience-free scaremongering which, only towards the end, when the reader it was aimed at has long since lost concentration, does she begrudgingly admit that they are in fact harmless basking sharks.

Me thinks it's going to be a long season.

Deep breaths, deep breaths and.....relax.

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