

UPY 2016 winners

by Duncan Whittaker

UwP speaks to the winners of the four main categories to get an insight into the thought process of a champion photographer...

Davide Lopresti

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

Do you spend time thinking up images before a dive trip?

I spend a lot of time thinking about the photos and planning how I take that particular picture; I try to see it in my mind. Sometimes, the conditions in the water change and my plans are altered so I have to think about how to quickly reinvent the photo. The main part it is to think and use your brain before and during the shoot.

When you are shooting do you have competitions in mind primarily?

When I photograph, I never think of a specific competition; my only thought is for the photography and the best result. My aim is to photograph to the best of my ability; the competition at the moment of the shot does not come into play.

If not, what makes you decide on which images to enter and do you consult with anyone else for a second opinion?

The photo selection process for a contest is always a very complicated and difficult procedure. However, when you have a strong photo that works, this strikes immediately and you don't have any doubt. I usually choose my photos alone for the contests.

Do you value competitions as an indicator of how good your shots are?

I think competitions are a good indicator of how well we have managed to communicate with our photography. An important part of photography is what others feel about it and the emotions that this is able to communicate. I think that competitions can be good indicators of this as a photo is able to get to the emotion of another person.



Do you have any advice for new underwater photographers who have never entered a competition?

The three best tips I can give are photographing, photographing, and photographing.

Achieving good results requires so much effort, so much dedication, and love for the sea; and a little luck never hurts.



Pier Mane

Up & Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

Do you spend time thinking up images before a dive trip?

I am really a beginner; I only started in mid 2014 reading Martin Edge's book plus a few other books. I look at pictures on the internet and get inspiration; I ask myself how I could replicate these images. I am at the phase where replicating images helps me to master the techniques. I look at Davide Lopresti's Gold photo this year; what a creation! I have thought and thought about how I would do it and still have no idea; even if he explained it in the caption. So, next trip I will practice long exposure and perhaps next purchase will be some snoots.

When you are shooting do you have competitions in mind primarily?

Definitely not; or at least up to now. I have been in competition from a very early age; first with skiing and then the corporate ladder. When I started with underwater photography I promised myself I was going to do it just for myself; something for fun and to express my creativity rather than external rewards. Although it is likely that I may now participate in future competitions, I still want to go underwater free of pressure to create

a competition picture and I would rather continue focusing on producing images that I enjoy making and looking at.

If not, what makes you decide on which images to enter and do you consult with anyone else for a second opinion?

This was my first competition; my portfolio is rather small but I had no clue what to submit. I attended a workshop with Martin Edge in November; competition photographs were discussed and his guidance was to select "wow" pictures. I looked at what other photos had been successful and tried to imagine which of my images would look good in a publication. The night before the deadline I asked Martyn Guess if he liked my 20 selected pictures.

Do you value competitions as an indicator of how good your shots are?

I wanted to stay out of underwater photo competitions as I wanted to be happy with my own development without relative comparison. A few friends encouraged me to submit a few images to the UPY and I agreed. I felt I needed some confirmation that I was working in the right direction. Although I entered

all of my photos into the up and coming category, I never expected that they would select three images; I was hoping to place one. I have to say that looking at competition images helps to raise your personal standards and entering competitions helps to push the boundaries.

Do you have any advice for new underwater photographers who have never entered a competition?

I am not sure if I am in a position to give any advice as I am still learning. I would suggest to everyone to do it for fun; don't take it too seriously. The judges have taken incredible pictures and have achieved great heights in this field but in the context of UPY they still represent only three points of view. If the judges do not select your photos then that does not mean your photos are not great in their own right; my favourite picture I took so far is an open mouth black tip I shot in South Africa; it did not even place. I wish UPY would put all of the 3500 entries somewhere; this would be a great source of inspiration. I want to dedicate my winning picture to all new underwater photographers as my advice is in the title; Three pillars – practice, patience, and luck.



Dan Bolt

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

Do you spend some time thinking up images before a dive trip?

Like most underwater photographers, I do try to anticipate what I might encounter on a dive and therefore have the right camera setup that I think might cover whatever turns up. On 90% of my dives I do not think about the images I might be able to take and the other 10% are those repeat dives where I am going back for a specific subject; on these trips I will try to think about how best I might use the situation I'm likely to find myself in. But as we all know, nature rarely performs to anyone else's schedule but her own!

When you are shooting do you have competitions in mind primarily?

Unless I'm in an 'on the day' type of competition (when the whole point of the dive is to enter the comp), then no. I primarily shoot because I love the marine eco-system and I find it endlessly fascinating. This is what drives me to take photographs; to spot unusual behaviour, rare animals, or just the every-day 'amazing' that non-divers don't get to see. If I find a subject and situation that I can see

might build into something special then I will switch into 'competition mode' for my shooting but to be honest that doesn't happen too often.

If not, what makes you decide on which images to enter and do you consult with anyone else for a second opinion?

Underwater photographic 'success' is often driven by this year's fashionable trip, newly accessible creature, latest bit of kit, or technique made popular by "pro's". This I try to avoid because I think that you're not really proving anything other than your ability to copy an image someone has already taken. Walking this path will, on occasion, decrease your chances of winning, but it means that when you are judged highly then your shot will stand out of the crowd. I don't consult because, trust me, I am my own harshest critic!

Do you value competitions as an indicator of how good your shots are?

Obviously it is very gratifying to do well in competitions and it feels good to have internationally acclaimed judges feed-back on your work. But, if you are trying to develop

your own individual style then you have to accept that not everyone will like your photos and therefore you may go through patches of winning nothing at all. It is possible to be very happy with the work you're producing while accepting that not everyone will 'get' your imagery.

Do you have any advice for new underwater photographers who have never entered a competition?

Get the basics right and the rest will come! Chatting to some people at the recent UPY awards, they said they "must try harder," to which I said "stop trying so hard!" It is very easy to get consumed by chasing competition-level images. When, more often than not, once you are relaxed with your approach to photography, are competent with your kit, know your subjects and have patience, then the magic will start to happen.



Marty Engels Dunmore

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer 2016

Do you spend some time thinking up images before a dive trip?

Not as much in the past but probably more and more in the future. I only started underwater photography 3 years ago; so instead of thinking about “winning images” I have focused primarily on my photographic skills and making the ocean my home. Each of my trips was set out with a personal goal to learn a new photographic skill and to extend my ability to capture photographic opportunities; and there is still a lot to be learned.

When you are shooting do you have competitions in mind primarily?

No, not at all.

If not, what makes you decide on which images to enter and do you consult with anyone else for a second opinion?

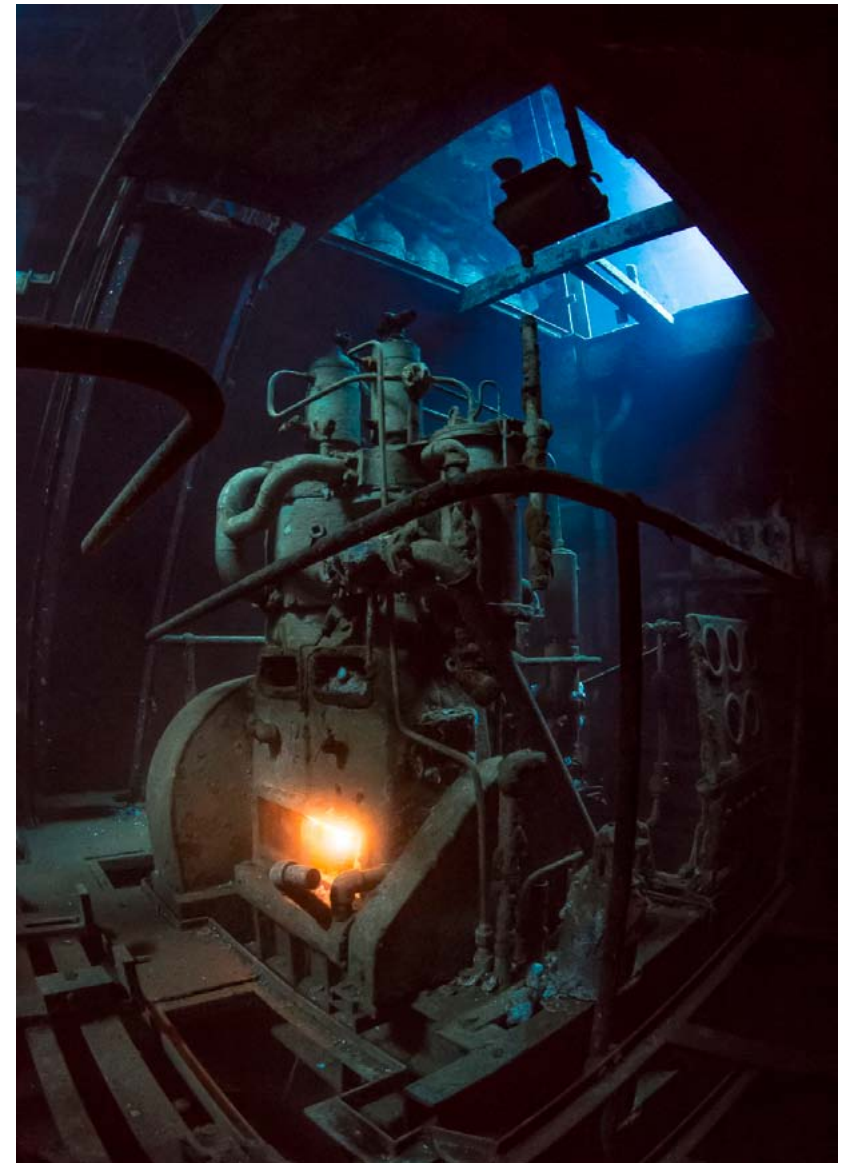
I try to enter my best images; those that are technically as good as possible at the time of shooting but also which mirror my compassion for the ocean and which are able to transmit this to the audience.

Do you value competitions as an indicator of how good your shots are?

This depends on who is judging the competition; if the judges are successful and highly experienced underwater photographers with inspiring portfolios then I will certainly take it as an indication that my photography is on the right way. To be absolutely honest, I would not enter my images in a competition with a judging panel whose work I do not admire.

Do you have any advice for new underwater photographers who have never entered a competition?

Think outside of the box; produce original images to the highest technical standard which show your love to the world below the waves and with the highest respect to the ocean and all its creatures.



You can download all of the 80 winning images from UPY 2016 at

www.upylondon.com/2016yearbook.aspx

Duncan Whittaker

Issue 89/37



ULTRALIGHT

CONTROL SYSTEMS



We manufacture trays for your digital camera & video housings and arms to add a strobe or light.



Special
GoPro
mounts

The original arms with the O-ring in the ball.

ULTRALIGHT CONTROL SYSTEMS SELLS THE ONLY TRAYS, HANDLES, ARMS, CLAMPS AND ADAPTERS THAT ARE MANUFACTURED AND ASSEMBLED IN THE USA. QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE ARE OUR #1 PRIORITIES. ALL PARTS ARE MACHINED (NOT MOLDED) FROM THE HIGHEST GRADE ALUMINUM AND HARD ANODIZED. OTHER PARTS ARE STAINLESS STEEL.



18 years in business. 100% customer satisfaction guaranteed. "Do not be fooled by all the copy cat brands that look like ours. Ask for genuine ULCS parts made in the USA"



Made in
the USA

www.ulcs.com

"Often copied,
never equaled"