

Parting Shot 1

Babies are a popular subject for underwater photography. Many photographers earn good money shooting baby swimming lessons in the pool, in fact, it has long been recognised as one of few profitable avenues in our field.

By far the best known water baby photo is on the cover of Nirvana's seminal album *Nevermind*, certainly amongst 40 somethings now, who were full of teen spirit at the time of its release. Although, I suspect most underwater shooters wouldn't be able to name the photographer (Kirk Weddle) who took that classic image, I know I can't without the help of Google.

My daughter Isabella was born in June and we have been doing baby swimming lessons with her in the pool in England. These are mainly aimed at teaching the parents how to introduce babies to the water in a safe way, as well as having a qualified teacher check her submergence reflex before we start dipping her. Like most babies, she's taken to the water instantly.

While I had already photographed her in the pool, I was really keen to take a picture of her in the place I love, the ocean. And the opportunity came in December with a trip to Grand Cayman, when she was 5 months old. She did underwater "swims" every day in the pool, and on our penultimate day we got up early and headed to the calm, pampering waters of Seven Mile Beach to let her swim in the sea before the sun got too strong.

In the pool, I shot her with a rectilinear lens behind my Carl Zeiss underwater corrector port, but in the sea, I wanted the photo to place her in the



Nikon D5 and Nikonos 13mm fisheye. Subal ND5 housing. 2 x Inon Z240 strobes. 1/320th @ f/16. ISO 320.

wider scene, so switched over to a fisheye. She did two submergences in the sea, each lasting about two seconds (felt like two minutes to the parents) and came up smiling away. I engaged the motor drive on my D5 and blasted off a series of frames so we could pick the best facial expression and pose.

This photo is not the most creative, nor the most graphically strong I have taken in 2016. But it will be the one that I am sure I will look at for the rest of my life. It is already on the wall of both

her grandfathers' houses! It is a reminder for me that while we strive for artistic significance in our images, sometimes capturing those personal memories of a beautiful reef, the thrill of a shark encounter or, in my case, Isabella's first dip into the Silent World, can be a far more important use of our cameras.

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Parting Shot 2

No winter blues for me! Winter in many parts of the UK is often a damp, overcast and relatively mild affair with just the odd day of cold, still, sunny weather to stop us all getting depressed and longing for the summer.

Photographically it can be tough to produce worth-while images. Many marine creatures have left the coastal waters for safer deep water wintering grounds and the water clarity is very often sub-optimal as winter storms batter the coastline.

For the nudibranch enthusiast (like yours-truly) these dark winter months can actually be quite rewarding. A number of species hatch in the early winter and spend the next few months munching on hydroids and visibly growing on a weekly basis.

An added bonus of the drop in water temperature and clarity is the beautiful green colouration our waters can sometimes take on during the winter months.

On a dive at the end of last winter when a favourite slug-hunting spot was beginning to produce some superb specimens, we had the most amazing emerald-green colour in the water. The combination of poor visibility and the low angle of the sun



Olympus O-MD E-M1 in Aquatica AE-M1. Olympus 12-50mm at 28mm. Subsee +10. Sea & Sea YS-D1 + snoot. 1/100th, f/7.1, iso200

brought an eerie-green glow to the ambient light at about 10m.

I was fortunate to find a subject that made it possible to shoot upwards and take advantage of this gift of colour. It took some care to balance the low ambient-light levels with my

single, snooted, flash but the result was one of my favourite images of 2016 :)

Dan Bolt

www.underwaterpics.com

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and yours could be the next
Parting Shot.**