

Auto ISO has been available in most stills cameras for some time but speaking as a mainly video shooter the advent of the Panasonic GH5 is one of the first cameras at its level/price range to offer stepless Auto ISO when shooting video and this offers a major advantage or control.

Auto ISO is probably the last in a line of automation which began in the SLR world just 40 years ago (younger readers can glaze over now if you wish) with, believe it or not, auto iris. Prior to that you had to view the scene with the aperture wide open and then rotate a ring to 'stop it down' to the taking aperture while you took the photo. This was then improved with the sprung loaded Auto Iris which was effectively the first form of photographic automation.

Shutter speeds were also manual and in steps of 'one stop'; 1/30th, 1/60th, 1/125th etc and the next improvement was a built in light meter. Then came the built in light meter which controlled the aperture but it was still in 'full stops'.

Nowadays we have fractions of a shutter speed and aperture so the photographic accuracy has just got better and better. Add in post production tweaks from Photoshop and, with video, Final Cut and After Effects, and we have amazing control.

So Auto ISO for video shooters is probably the last real improvement to tempt our wallets and it does bring real benefits in that you can peg the shutter speed (which is quite important when shooting video) and also the aperture for depth of focus and then let the Auto ISO keep the exposure consistent when panning from dark to light areas.

That just leaves us to point the camera at interesting subjects/happenings.

Hats off to Retra

Alex Mustard's thorough review of the new Retra Flash marks quite a milestone because it is the first new underwater strobe to come to the market for quite some time but I am going to have to digress already.

You see, in the world of underwater photography and indeed the photographic world as a whole, a strobe is not a strobe but a flashgun. It's called a flashgun because it... flashes. Strobes, on the other hand, have an effect named after them... stroboscopic because they emit multiple pulses of light in a timed sequence.

Now I fully realise that pointing this out will make no difference whatsoever because the language has been incorrectly infiltrated and a flashgun has become a strobe but I feel better for making my point.

Now where was I? Oh yes. The Retra Flash. I'd like to congratulate this comparatively small Slovenian company for not only calling it a 'Flash' but more importantly for having the courage of their convictions to develop a new product in an already mature marketplace. By the sounds of it they have come up with a great product which should keep the established big manufacturers on their toes and competition can only be a good thing for the consumer.

More importantly, even though they are underwater photographers themselves, they listened to a small but wisely chosen group of experienced underwater photographers to provide precisely what is needed in the field and I'd like to wish them every success in their venture.

Keith Hiscock's excellent Parting Shot brought it home to me what an uphill struggle it must be for marine scientists and the comparatively modern industry of 'wrasse potting' provides the perfect example.

In laymans terms, it goes like this. The Scottish Salmon Farming industry put out the call that they need, and will pay handsomely for, small cleaner wrasse which are not abundant enough in their area. It appears that these fish can clean the lice off farmed salmon and so solve what is to them an 'ecological' problem.

Now it turns out that the SW coast of the UK is a favoured area for these little lice lovers so a mini fishing industry has emerged in the past year or so catching and shipping them north of the border to be put to work up there. All these SW fishermen had to do was to buy specially designed pots for just £25 each or 10 for £250, and they were in the money. They already had the boats and the hauling gear so it's a steal of an initial investment.

The scientists, on the other hand, have the job of establishing just what effect removing these fish will have on the local marine environment and that could take years, if not decades; by which time there may have been an irreversible effect.

All the fishermen have to do is say is that it's not having any effect and carry on regardless but the scientific world must flag up the potential problem then try and raise the funding and then do the time consuming work to establish the true facts.

See what I mean?

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