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—*Learning to dive the Earth's interior: is it that difficult?!*

Two buddies are holding the line. The second is holding the arm of the one leading the way, communicating with him by means of touch. With visibility nil, the first buddy protects his head and face with his hand in case of contact with a wall or rock. Suddenly, for some unknown reason, the line moves and goes out of their hands. They search for it but to no effect. Their mistake: they were not holding the line properly. Will they panic? No. Their nearby instructor stops the exercise. The entire scenerio took place on dry land

Near the diving center, a guideline was stretched and positioned between some trees. Following a classroom explanation of methods and emergency procedures, the

techniques are performed on a land drill prior to their underwater implementation. The exercises enable students to master techniques, correcting and commenting on them right during the exercise. These

are often treated in the ludic fashion, allowing time to joke and relax. Zero visibility is simulated by bandages that can be easily removed, providing a very interesting learning instrument.

**Is overhead diving a marginal and difficult activity?**  
No, not at all. In fact, it's the other way round. Along with the rebreathers, the technical discipline with the greatest

development is diving in overhead environments. While rebreather diving currently induces fewer concerns today, overhead diving remains worrying for many potential students. Many harbour groundless fears,



# Learning Cave Diving

*Is it difficult?*



Safety drill

like getting wedged into narrow galleries, zero visibility and freezing water to name a few.

The courses take place with a minimum of several metres visibility in galleries with more than comfortable dimensions. Water temperatures vary from 13-14°C in the Lot region of France, up to 26°C in Mexico, with Croatia (18°C) and Florida (22°C) in the mid-range. In the Jura in



ing to be very demanding. The course's goal is to introduce divers to this new

environment and allow them to continue down this road in total safety. However, being claustrophobic is a definite hindrance!

### What are the different stages?

The first level is Cavern, a two-day discovery of overhead diving without going deeper than 60m. Maintaining sight of daylight at the entrance allows the ideal conditions to discover this type of diving.

The second level is the introduction to Cave. This is the first level where students penetrate a cave to within 60m from the entrance point with the absence of daylight. These two levels do not involve any restrictions, complex navigation or poor visibility.

At NACD (National Association for Cave Diving) and NSS-CDS (National Speleological Society-Cave Diving Section), the next level is Apprentice cave diver followed by (Full) Cave Diver. The majority of other diving agencies have grouped these two last levels together in the final training of self-sufficient divers in the overhead environment (Cave or full cave diver), usually over four days. It is possible to make a combination of these courses

over several days or a week.

You can find this type of curriculum, originally issued by NACD and NSS-CDS, at the agencies like TDI or IANTD. These courses can be taken in open-circuit or with a rebreather. These are two different courses, and can be optionally followed by cave specialty courses: sidemount, stages, scooter or topography.

DIR agencies like GUE, UTD or InnerSpace Explorers have a slightly

different curriculum. From the very beginning, divers must pass basic skill training including Hogarthian configuration, buoyancy and horizontal anti-silting position in the water (trim), frog kick, safety drill (assisting with long hose of 2m length), valve drill (closing the valves in case of leak), team positioning during progression or communication (like a star). In this way, these skills are already mastered before the special



Leaking gas

Switzerland and northern Italy, the water is a chilly 7-8°C, going even lower to 4-6°C in the Russian Ordinskaya Cave. However, the water is generally not that

cold. A drysuit and good undergarment ensures there is no problem.

A frequent fear is the course's difficulty, with some people imagining the train-



Out of gas

# Cave Diving



Air sharing and touch contact

cave training, like level 1. In the "classic" curriculum, all these skills are integrated during the course.

### What cave training is about

One peculiarity of the overhead training is to use the accident analyses and statistics from the 1970s. In 1979, Sheck Exley wrote his *Basic Cave Diving: A Blueprint for Survival*, a small manual of 46 pages based on real accident cases in the Americas.

This featured scrupulous analysis and the lessons necessary to avoid them. In Europe, the accident

and incident statistics were always utilized, as it was a small community. Conversely, it's a rather good method to obtain a realistic training. At present, the overhead diving instruction retains the most concise and organized pattern of all.

In most cases, the cause of most accidents is due to a diver's lack of training. This is increasingly due to executing dives that do not correspond to a diver's training (complex navigation, use of the rebreather, scooter and lack of experience in general). The first thing learned is how to deal with

the guideline, as it is the main reason or an aggravating factor in about one-third of problems. These include the absence of a guideline, lost line with minimal visibility, entanglement, how to deploy, follow and retrieve the guideline, finding the guideline in minimal visibility and to not tangle the line.

After this follow the rules of gas consumption and gas management known as the rule of thirds. Today, however, the rule of fourths is utilized, meaning a fourth on the way into the cave, a fourth

go quietly, amid the noise and haste...

[ 3 hours @ 20m - no deco ]



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on the way out and a half for safety margin.

Then comes the depth (don't dive deeper than 30-40m with air), the equipment and particularly the lights (one primary light and two backups). Solo diving is not recommended, even if students learn how to make it out alone

in case of buddy loss and bad visibility.

During training, the students also learn how to read the place, especially in order to find the exit (rock erosion pattern, waves on sand...) and to avoid the dangers (collapses, restrictions). Communication is another

keynote, with hand signals, primary light, touch contact being employed.

Most of the basic notions are studied from Cavern to Intro to cave level. The Full Cave course covers advanced dive planning depending on the environment, decompression, navigation within



Rescue training



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Scooter diving in Orda Cave. Photo by Vitya Lyagushkin

main and secondary galleries, complex navigational elements using arrows and cookies to communicate on the guideline and locating the exit.

All these subjects are studied along with academics, land drills, their implementation in the water including emergency procedures in a team (out of gas, rescue) and in certain cases individually (lost line, lost diver).

The number of cave divers is growing consistently, with agencies offering more advanced rebreather courses and trimix in caves with TDI. Today, there is even an association fully dedicated to the cave exploration instruction—IDREO (International

Diving Research and Exploration Organization). Courses include Cave Explorer 1 level (a full cave course equivalent) and the more advanced Cave Explorer 2 level, which examines all possible cave techniques along with the options of using a rebreather and trimix in cave exploration.

Above all, comprehensive education ensures participants can safely enjoy unforgettable excursions in an overhead environment! ■

*Pascal Bernabé of France holds the world record depth on a deep dive using self-contained breathing apparatus. He dived to 330m on trimix on 5 June 2005 off Propriano, Corsica. See [PascalBernabe.com](http://PascalBernabe.com)*

Running some guideline in a land drill



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AUGUST 23<sup>TH</sup> - 28<sup>TH</sup> ADVANCED NITROX  
DECO PROCEDURE

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# Making the Shot

Text and images by Aaron Wong

*—A rare look behind the making of an iconic image. From conception of the idea to the execution, you will be surprised how little of it was left to chance.*

**The sudden rocking of our truck shook me out of my slumber. I struggled to focus on my watch. Has it already been one-and-a-half hours since we set off, after loading the tanks? Looking out of the window at the jungle trail sort of threw me deeper into my world of confusion. Are we going diving? Being based in tropical Asia, diving to me usually means swaying palm trees, sunny skies, and white sandy beaches. So the 20°C air and dusty jungle trail was at the total opposite end of the spectrum for me. Dressed in thick jackets and snuggled in a truck with tanks banging in the back, we headed out to dive the famous cenotes of Cancun, Mexico.**

Found mainly in the Yucatán Peninsula, cenotes are freshwater caves that are formed by the dissolution of rock and the resulting subsurface void, and the subsequent structural collapse of the rock ceiling above. Over millions of years, these caves can grow to amazing sizes with water visibility sometimes reaching 70 meters. It is a dream location for any underwater photographer, for sure.

I was on an assignment to cover a



Original sketch before the expedition

story for an article and had been getting some great shots in several cenotes for over a week. But today's shoot was totally different. I had heard of some cenotes that still contained human remains from the days of the Mayans.

Cenotes were considered sacred grounds for the Mayans, and it is known that they conducted human sacrifice for which they would throw the victims into the cenote to please the rain gods. Brutal as it may seem now, such was the culture of these unique people who thrived in this region from 250 AD to 900 AD.

I was told that most of these remains were at least 700 years old. The thought of coming face to face with a 700-year-old skull was an adventure in itself, let alone the chance to photograph it.

I had the idea of the shot sketched out months before the trip. Sketching my ideas on paper is something I do all the time. It gives a clear visual reference to my team in regards to what I want to achieve. That, to me, is the first step to a successful shoot.

This particular shot required a back light from a distance and a model diver in the background. It was clear from the start that it wasn't going to be a simple point and shoot scenario. Shots like this don't just happen without some level of planning. So, I put together a team of support divers, called some





# photo & video

Skull of a deer amongst the human remains (right); Rappelling 25 meters in the cenote (below)

local guides who might know of such a cenote, got my model—David, who is of pure Mayan decent (it seemed only fitting)—and off we went.

## The expedition

They say that getting there is half the fun. Or is it? As it turned out, some of these cenotes were way off the beaten track. Most were owned by the original family who owned the land. These were mostly not open to public, let alone photographers with big cameras. Even if they did allow divers, there were those who did not allow cameras, as these cenotes were still considered sacred to the Mayan decedents who still lived there.

How else do you explain 700-year-old remains that are left untouched all this time? In some ways, I'm glad they are not open to public or divers.

We finally found a cenote that allowed us in, and yes, it was one of those places in the middle of nowhere— hence, the

one-and-a-half-hour drive! Being so isolated meant that we had to bring all that we needed—twin tanks, gear, cameras, lights and all.

The truck finally stopped at a small village at the end of the trail where we could drive no more. We rigged up our equipment and had to hike the rest of the way. Passing by the villagers, we must have seemed like visiting aliens.

I was expecting some walking, but I wasn't counting on it to be almost a mile long. I can assure you that carrying tanks and a full camera rig with spare lights through uneven jungle terrain isn't exactly a fun thing to do. Whoever said that getting there was half the fun surely hadn't been here!

We arrived at a small opening in the ground in the middle of the forest where the locals had built a small platform and simple rope systems for access. I went to the edge expecting to see water, but instead, what greeted me was a 25-meter drop. That sort of

explained the need for ropes.

Looking closer, I realized it wasn't just a shaft but a big cavity in the ground measuring some 35 meters across. It then dawned on me that the very ground I was standing on at the edge actually had nothing underneath it but a 25-meter drop! We were standing on 'ground' that was a mere three meters thick! It kind of sent

a chill down my spine.

If not for this small two-meter opening, I would never have guessed the ground around me covered with trees was just a 'crust'. It makes one wonder what else lies beneath.

We had to strap on harnesses and repelled down one at a time. My guide went down first followed by me, two other support divers, and lastly, my camera rig. It isn't everyday you get to see your camera rig, strapped in whatever way possible, lowered down to you with a thin rope 25 meters over head. I wished I had a spare camera with me just so I could photograph that scene!

The cavern opened up to its full width, as I repelled past the three meters of surface rock. I could see the roots of the

trees above dangling from beneath, some even making it to the water 25 meters below. It was a magical sight, and it made me feel so small in this world of giant trees and rocks.

Looking at all the effort it took just to get the camera here, It was as extreme as underwater photography can get. Waiting in the water for the rest of the crew and equipment to arrive was a surreal and almost eerie experience. Knowing that human remains lay beneath me didn't help either. I was almost afraid to move my fins!

Looking up at the small opening above, I wondered if this was the last thing these unfortunate sacrificial victims saw some 700 years ago. Who were they? Prisoners of tribal conflicts or volun-



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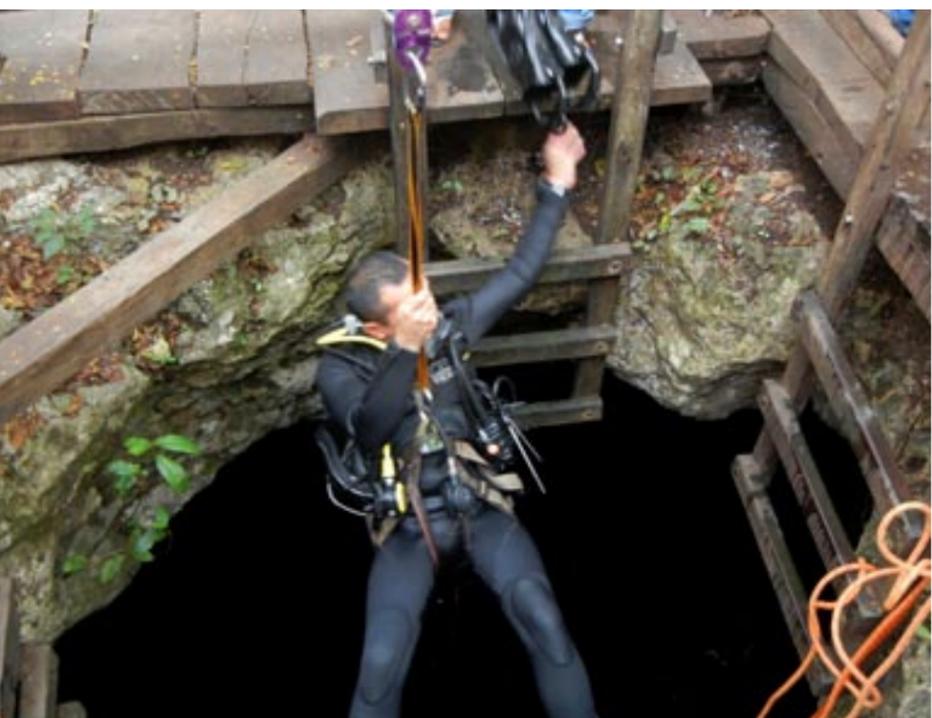




photo & video



Original 'out take' from the shoot, before lights were properly adjusted

within the debris wasn't easy. Once we located the right skull, everyone moved back to prevent any stir ups. My model knew exactly where to position himself based on our pre-dive briefing. He stayed perfectly still as a support diver positioned directly behind him.

I hovered slightly above my final shooting position, as I knew I only had one chance at it before the area around the skull got stirred up. I tested the lighting and exposure for awhile, and when I was totally ready, I signalled

to everyone, descended slowly to less than an inch from the skull, fired six shots, and it was all done.

It was tough getting so close to the skull without touching it the slightest bit. Let's put it this way: it had been sitting in its final resting place in peace for 700 years, the last thing I wanted to do was disturb it!

As I moved my camera away, I took a moment for a really close look, eye to eye. I thought for a moment that I might be the closest anyone has been looking into those eyes in all this time—a mere three inches away. It raised more questions than fear, but I knew better than to overstay my welcome and

left the skull in its dark watery tomb.

Getting out of that cave was a muscle wrenching tug of war for the support team on the surface, and a painfully constricting experience for us. The harnesses weren't designed

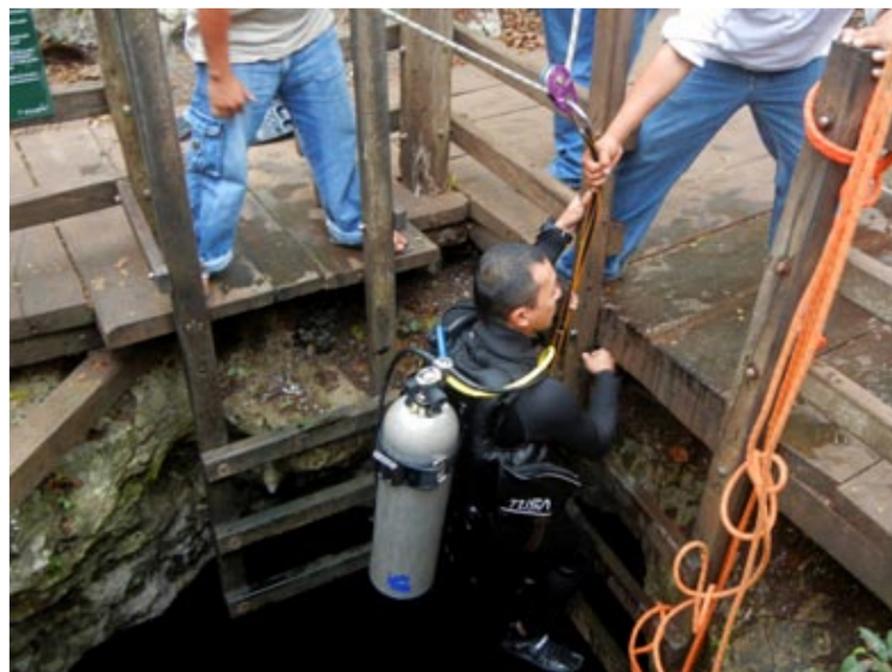
for comfort, and when your entire body weight including your scuba gear rested solely on the harness, it was far from comfortable—something the guys found out the really nasty way!

Slowly but surely, we all immersed from the hole, back to the world of the living. It was one of those shots I wouldn't soon forget. Considering the logistics and conditions, it was amazing how much effort it took for good pictures. I am glad I managed to capture a great shot out of it all, and I am grateful to the team who helped make it happen.

Now, all that was left was the one-mile hike through the jungle back to our truck, followed by a one-and-a-half-hour drive. One suddenly remembers that old saying again, that getting there is half the fun, but there's nothing mentioned about the getting back part of it! ■

Aaron Wong is a widely published underwater, fashion and commercial photographer based in Singapore. For more information, please visit: [www.aaronsphtocraft.com](http://www.aaronsphtocraft.com)

*As I moved my camera away, I took a moment for a really close look, eye to eye. I thought for a moment that I might be the closest anyone has been looking into those eyes in all this time—a mere three inches away.*



Aaron Wong exits cenote after the photo shoot

teers from within the community? It was a powerful place to be in—a place of such history and untold suffering. It made me feel even smaller.

**In the cenote**

We descended to about 20 meters and searched through the maze of branches and logs. It was pitch black and our touches did little to help, as the slightest movement stirred up the sediment. Unlike the ocean, this was a

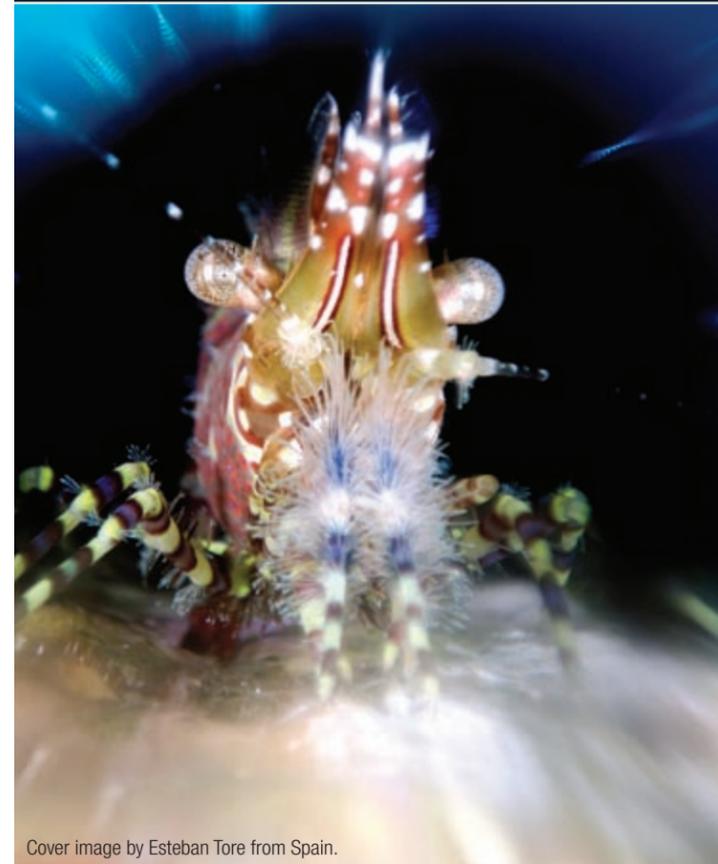
stagnant body of water, which meant that any sediment that was stirred up took forever to clear. The slightest movement kicked up rotting leaves that covered the bottom. Think of it as fine tissue paper in still water. It was a tough challenge to get around, and it took perfect buoyancy control to a whole new level.

I was told there were seven sets of skeletons within this cenote. Finding the right one in the right angle for the shot

*It isn't everyday you get to see your camera rig, strapped in whatever way possible, lowered down to you with a thin rope 25 meters overhead.*

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Text and underwater photo  
by Don Silcock. Product images  
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In the first article of this series, we looked at the often confusing technology and buzzwords behind mirrorless cameras, and then in the second, we explored the lenses available for this new genre of camera that are suitable for underwater photography. The technology clearly has a lot to offer underwater photographers due to its excellent functionality and small form factor. However, the review of available lenses quickly narrowed down the choices of camera manufacturers to Olympus and Panasonic with their shared Micro Four Thirds technology or the Sony NEX range. Unfortunately, while Olympus lenses can be used on Panasonic cameras and vice-versa, they are not compatible with the Sony cameras. So, we have a situation similar to the perennial one for underwater photographers with DSLR's: which is best, Nikon or Canon?

# Housing Mirrorless Cameras

*for Underwater Photography*





So, if you are looking to go mirrorless, you are faced with a choice: Sony or Micro Four Thirds. A definitive discussion on their relative merits is really beyond the scope of this article. Just like the Nikon and Canon debate, both are very good and highly unlikely to hold back your creative abilities. However, there are a number of excellent websites available to slate your thirst for knowledge, and I would personally recommend checking out Tom Hogan's Sansmirror (www.sansmirror.com) as an excellent starting point.

I recently went through the whole process of deciding which mirrorless camera to buy and have chosen to 'invest in' (which sounds better than 'buy', when you have to explain the expenditure to your wife) the Olympus OMD camera and a selection of lenses.

The rationale I used to justify my investment was that I wanted a lightweight photo kit for travel photography from which I could select items to provide a small macro kit for underwater photography and a back-up to my DSLR rig. The OMD ticked all the boxes for both travel and underwater photography. I am now the proud owner of a black body and a

Nauticam Fisheye port for Panasonic 8mm



number of Olympus and Panasonic Micro Four Thirds lenses.

### Housing choices

If the availability of lenses significantly reduces the choice of camera manufacturer, the availability of housings to take them underwater has an even more dramatic effect. At the top end of town, there is vigorous competition for the DSLR housing market, ranging from Ikelite with its very cost-effective one-size-fits-all polycarbonate housing to the top-of-the-range Austrian manufacturers Seacam and Subal with their uber-quality aluminium housings. In between are Aquatica, Nauticam,



Nauticam macro port for Panasonic 45mm

Hugyfot, Nexus and several others, all of whom make excellent housings.

Interestingly, though, of these, only Nauticam appears to be interested in the mirrorless market and are actively pursuing it.

Reading between the lines, it appears that the rate at which mirrorless cameras are being released is beyond the capa-

bility of most of the housing manufacturers to keep up with, while still developing housings for the new DSLR's. Even Ikelite, whose housing business model is based on using the same basic box reconfigured for different camera models, state on their website that they will not be developing housings for the popular Olympus OMD, nor any of the Sony NEX models, nor the Panasonic mirrorless cameras.

It would seem that the people in charge of these companies have reached similar conclusions and decided to focus their available resources on the relatively "slower moving" DSLR cameras. The wisdom of this decision will become apparent over time, but it is a big call when the market for underwater DSLR housings seems likely to reduce, as the popularity of mirrorless housings grows.

### Hobson's choice

A Google search for

Nauticam Olympus OMD housing

Olympus 60mm macro lens



"Olympus OMD underwater housing" will quickly identify your options, and there are only two horses in the race: Nauticam and Olympus themselves, with their own PT-EP08 housing.

Rumors abound that Hong Kong-based 10Bar, which has produced a range of housings for other cameras, will

duce one for the OMD. But, for now, they are not in the race.

Similarly, Japanese housing manufacturer Acqupazza appears to be looking at making a housing for the OMD.

Of the two main horses though, Nauticam had what I wanted: a small, light housing for macro photography, which could double-up as a backup for the DSLR rig I use for wide-angle.

### My "investment"

Part of the rationale for choosing the Olympus OMD was the availability of two first-class dedicated macro lenses: the Panasonic 45mm and the Olympus 60mm, which correspond to 90mm and 120mm in the 35mm format. Reviews of both these lenses have been full of praise for their capability, and so it was obviously very important to me that I would be able to use them underwater.

It was the availability of the dedicated Nauticam port for the Panasonic lens together with





# photo & video



Panasonic 45mm macro lens



Panasonic 8mm fisheye lens

a 20mm extension ring that allowed it to be used with the 60mm Olympus that finally convinced me to buy the Nauticam OMD housing. Once I had crossed that bridge, I started to look at what I needed to use the OMD as a wide-angle backup.

Unfortunately, unlike DSLR's with which you can buy one dome port for a fish-eye lens and then various extension rings to use it with different wide-angle zooms or primes, with the Micro Four

Thirds lenses, you need different domes. After considering the Panasonic 7-14mm (14-28 equivalent) and Olympus 9-18mm (18-36 equivalent), I opted for the Panasonic 8mm fisheye lens, with its bright f3.5 maximum aperture and close-focus distance of just four inches. The 8mm is a really small lens, and its dedicated Nauticam dome is equally petite and easily slipped

in my carry-on. I have yet to use any of this equipment underwater, but can hardly wait to do so. Overall, I seem to have achieved my objective and now have a small, light, but highly functional and dedicated macro rig that takes up less space than my DSLR macro ports used to. Plus, the 8mm fisheye lens and port give me a back-up should something happen to my DSLR wide-angle rig!

the results possible with the D800, but for underwater macro photography, I think the OMD has everything I need. That said, I intend to try it and see what the OMD is capable of. Subsequent articles will detail these capabilities, but the next article in this series will cover underwater macro photography with mirrorless cameras. ■

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### System expansion

My new wide-angle DSLR rig is the highly regarded Nikon D800, combined with the Nikon 16mm fisheye lens and the 16-35mm zoom lens. I bought the camera because of the exceptional dynamic range capability of its sensor. I cannot see anyway the Olympus OMD, or any other mirrorless camera, can come close to achieving



Olympus OMD mirrorless camera



photo & video

Edited by Don Silcock

## Sony NEX-3N

Sony has announced details of its new NEX-3N mirrorless camera. The Sony NEX-3N has a 16.1 megapixel APS-C sized CMOS sensor with an ISO range of 200 to 16000 and comes with a built-in flash plus the capability to shoot HD movies at AVCHD 50i/25p. The NEX-3N is similar in size to a compact camera with dimensions of just 110mm x 62mm x 35mm and a weight of just 269g. Sony claims that it's the smallest, lightest camera with an APS-C sensor. The predecessor of the NEX-3N was the NEX-F3, which did not attract the attention of housing makers and so was not used for underwater photography. But with the more compact form factor of the NEX-3N, that may change.

The Sony NEX-3N will be available from March, with prices still to be announced.



## 10Bar's Canon EOS-M Housing

Hong Kong-based underwater photography manufacturer 10Bar has released a new housing for the Canon EOS-M mirrorless camera. Few details are currently available for the new housing, apart from the price; it sells for US\$850 with a 17mm lens flat port or US\$1000 with a semi-dome zoom port.

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## Ikelite's Nikon D5200 Housing

Ikelite responded quickly to the release of the Nikon D5200 DSLR and was first to market with a housing for the new camera. The D5200 is positioned at the top end of Nikon's "entry-level" camera range, but is packed with features and functionality. It looks more like a mid-range camera and is a sign of what is to come from Nikon, with their DX cameras. It looks likely the aluminum housing manufacturers will skip the D5200 leaving Ikelite as the only housing option for a very viable underwater DSLR. The Ikelite housing for the D5200 comes with the standard features including their propriety circuitry for TTL via hard wired strobes, access to all key controls including the video controls. The housing will be available in early March for US\$1500.

## Retra's New Prime Light Shaping Device (LSD)

Slovenian manufacturer Retra has announced a new version of their popular light shaping device (LSD) called the Prime. The new Prime LSD uses the same lens technology utilized used on the high-end LSD Pro, but is simpler and cheaper. The Prime is supplied with 13 standard light projection shapes and is compatible with a wide variety of strobes. The LSD prime is available now and retails at €349.00 (≈US\$460).



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## Mocean Armor



## Capture the Amazing iSea4

Professional Cinematographers housing for the iPhone 4 - 4S - 5



## Nauticam NEX-6 Housing

Nauticam has announced their new housing for the Sony NEX-6 mirrorless camera. The new housing provides access to both the Sony control wheel and control dial via the thumb to give control of the aperture and shutter settings when using the NEX-6 in manual mode. The camera's new mode dial is also accessible on the top of the housing. The housing features a re-engineered camera saddle, dual fiber optic strobe triggering ports and a dedicated ISO button. Nauticam has also produced a 7-inch dome port for the Sony 10-18mm f/4 WA zoom and the Macro/Zoom Control Port 45 to support the Sony 16-50mm f/3.5-5.6 retractable zoom. The NA-NEX6 is from February 15 at a U.S. retail price of \$1,650



## Inon close-up lenses

—The UCL-100M67 and UCL-100LD  
The lenses can deliver super macro imaging capabilities with optical glass lenses in three elements of three groups and an anti-reflection coating on all four inner surfaces. Both lenses also feature larger apertures to minimize vignetting even when using a camera with a 28mm lens at the wide end of its zoom range. The lenses are available in a 67mm threaded format as the UCL-100M67, or in an Inon bayonet format as the UCL-100LD. The Inon M67 series close-up lens can be stacked on either version, making for really super-macro.



## Nikon D7100

Nikon has announced the imminent release of their successor to the very popular D7000 DX format DSLR. The new D7100 has a brand new 24.1-megapixel DX-format CMOS sensor, and interestingly is supplied without an optical low pass filter (OLPF), which should result in higher resolution than similar size sensors, albeit with a risk of increased moiré in fine patterns. At first glance, the new D7100 would appear to be a basic upgrade of the D7000, some 2.5 years after it was first released. But this is not just the 24MP sensor from a D5200 packaged into a newer body, it's a brand new high resolution sensor, packaged together with Nikon's proven EXPEED 3 image processing engine, and features a native ISO range of 100 to 6400. The D7100 also has a new 51-point AF system and a new Multi-CAM 3500DX AF module. For metering, it uses Nikon's 3D Color Matrix Metering II 2,016-pixel RGB sensor and Scene Recognition System. Interestingly, Nikon has provided the camera with a 1.3x crop mode, which provides an extra telephoto boost (2X) with 15.4 megapixel resolution—something that should be really beneficial to underwater macro photographers. Physically, the D7100 is very similar to its



predecessor, and, with the exception of the new movie button on the top-plate, the key controls appear to be basically the same. So, there is every chance that it will fit into D7000 housings. Finally, Nikon has been describing the D7100 as the company's 'flagship DX model', which raises the question of whether the D400 (when it eventually arrives) will be DX or full-frame FX. The D7100 will be available in March 2013 for the suggested retail price of US\$1599.95

## Nauticam G15 Housing

Nauticam has announced the release of its NA-G15 housing for the Canon G15 high-end compact camera. The Canon G15 is the latest in the very popular G Series and sports several features that will be popular among underwater shooters. Significant improvements on the G15 are a dedicated record button for video, capable of shooting at either 1080/24p or 720/30p, a faster zoom lens with a f/1.8-2.8 variable aperture should be helpful for low light and shallow depth of field imaging. Canon says that the autofocus is now the fastest of any compact, 53 percent faster than the G12. The Nauticam housing promises to take full advantage of all the above features including the ability to use a variety of wet-mate lenses to get 100° or 150° FOV and various macro diopter strengths.



# Daniel Jean-Baptiste



## P O R T F O L I O



*Triggers*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste  
Hand-painted silk, 30 x 40 inches

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Reef Fish*, by  
Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-  
painted silk, 25 x 35 inches

*Lotus Garden*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste  
Hand-painted silk, 25 x 20 inches

## Jean-Baptiste

Text edited by Gunild Symes  
All images by Daniel Jean-Baptiste



**Born on the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, self-taught artist Daniel Jean-Baptiste, captures on sumptuous silk the brilliant, vivid colors of the vibrant marine life that thrives in the sea around his native homeland. In an interview with the artist, we find out more about the man, his art and his unique perspective and experience with the underwater world.**

*X-RAY MAG:* Tell us about yourself and how you came to create your marine themes on silk.

DJB: I am a natural self taught artist whose whole process of creating was something that arrived in my being when I was nine years old. I experimented in water colour while growing up in a small fishing village in St. Lucia. My introduction into the silk medium that I use today happened in 1982 when I got hired as an artist for a Canadian display company—Display Arts of Toronto—to produce large format hand-painted silk banners

for shopping centre interior decorations. Today, the work that I produce as a fine artist is more refined and very different compared to my early commercial work.

*X-RAY MAG:* When you create your art works, what drives your artistic vision?

DJB: I have a deep passion to create work that has never existed before. It has to be a creation that has its origins from my life. I am only interested in depicting the world as I experience it—just all beautiful and vibrant. I want the viewer to see paradise everywhere.

Jean-Baptiste  
2007

Jean-Baptiste



*X-RAY MAG:* What about the sea and its creatures inspires you?

DJB: I was very lucky to have grown up in a small fishing village. I spent every free moment on the old wooden jetty fishing and diving with all these

earthly wonders. I was so addicted to the ocean that I always tried to avoid school in order to enjoy life. My work reflects that time in my life when I was so excited to discover new fish, scary crabs and to swim in what looked like liquid diamonds. The effect of light on



*Under the Bahamian Sea*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 60 x 50 inches



*Caribbean Gold*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 30 x 40 inches

the sea floor and on the skins of fish has always been something that has fascinated me.

*X-RAY MAG:* Are you a scuba diver or do you snorkel?

I have never scuba dived, but I am a snorkelling expert; I can dive down to 50 feet easily.

*X-RAY MAG:* What sources do

you use to form or inform your underwater images?

The best information on my marine subjects is found first hand in the water—just observing them as they live. Photos from any source are also welcome, as well as more information from other sources including videos, photos and even written descriptions.

*X-RAY MAG:* What are your favorite dive sites?

All my dive sites are around St. Lucia. The best is Anse Chastanet, then Anse Cochon, the Pitons reserve, and then there is Maria Island, with its pristine flat waters.

*X-RAY MAG:* What do you want to tell or show the viewer about

the marine environment?

It is not so much what I want to tell them, but to make them feel and to see the beauty of marine life. If I can have a turtle-eating village know the beauty captured by the light dancing on the turtle's carapace, then maybe they might start to act differently towards conservation. You can only be



## Jean-Baptiste

*Seahorse*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 12 x 15 inches (left)

*Tranquility*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 37 x 77 inches (far left)

*Sunshine Angel*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 16 x 20 inches (bottom left)

*Caribbean Bottlenose*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 23.5 x 40 inches (below)

one of two things: either you are destructive or you are creative—and love is always creative, and so, I would like my work to create love.

*X-RAY MAG:* Describe your artistic process. What inspires your creative process and how are your art works created?

My work is created from my day dreams and from experiences I have had, even at the fish market. An idea arrives on its own, and I will develop that creation from many pencil sketches. I do not like producing photo-replicated work. I have to struggle to create a scene that no one has done before, and this is very difficult to do but very rewarding when successfully produced.

*X-RAY MAG:* How does your art relate to conservation or environmental issues facing our oceans and reefs?

The only way conservation is going to be effective is through making people aware of their actions, by bringing them an understanding about the delicate nature of the sea, but mostly by creating a bond that goes beyond just a food source or a garbage dump. Most of the world have never enjoyed the oceans, but maybe my





*Anse Chastenet* by Daniel Jean-Baptiste. Hand-painted silk, 23.5 x 36 inches

art can be an introduction to this massive stranger.

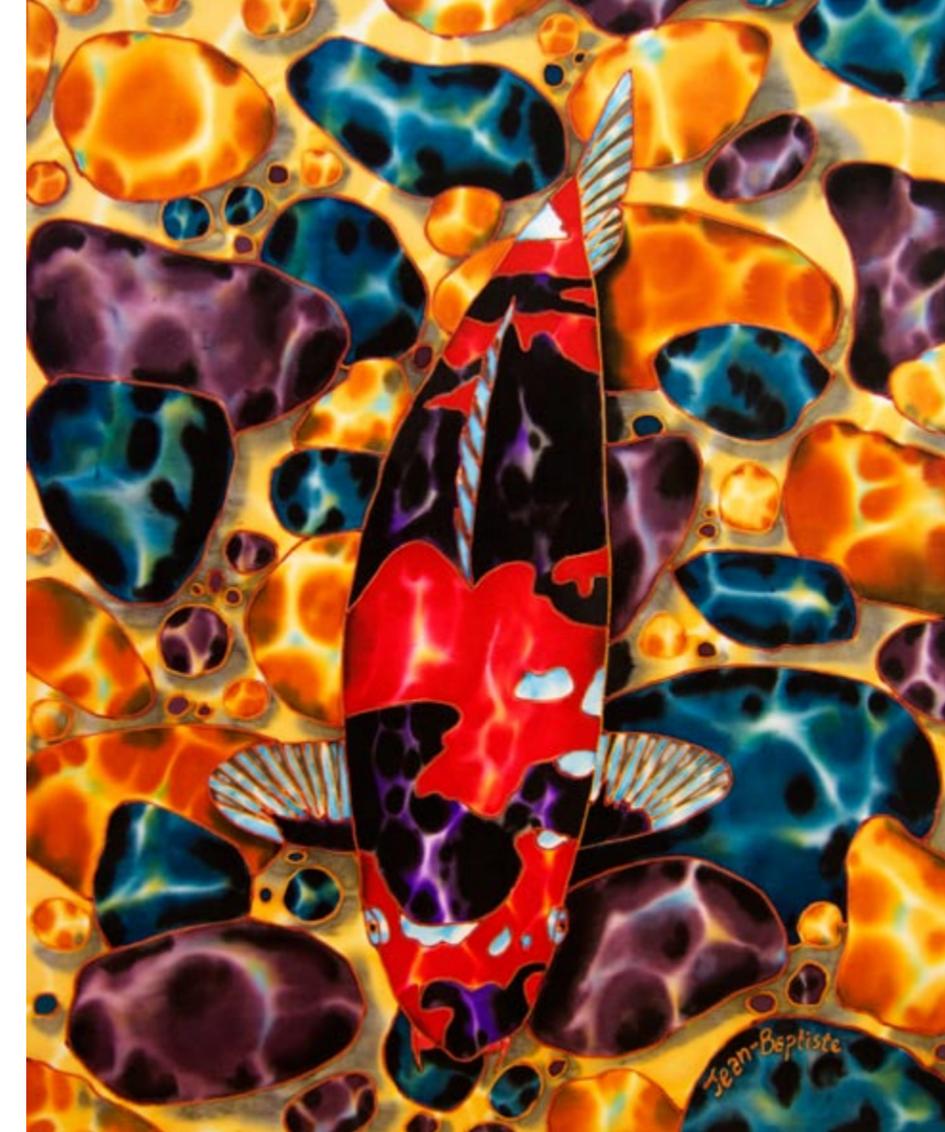
*X-RAY MAG: What's important in your art?*

I feel that it is important as an artist to

create a distinct style that can always be known as yours. I want the viewer to feel my soul, which has been breathed into each piece. I want you to feel excited about the art, just as much as I am insanely happy to paint them. I just want to

wake up a small part of the awareness of beauty and life. ■

For more information and to order prints or purchase originals from the artist, visit: [www.jean-baptiste.com](http://www.jean-baptiste.com)



*Black Red Koi*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste  
Hand-painted silk  
25 x 20 inches (top right)



*Caribbean Octopus*, by Daniel Jean-Baptiste  
Hand-painted silk  
16 x 20 inches