

Book review **La photo numérique sous-marine** By Isabelle & Amar Guillen

With the explosion in sales of compact digital cameras and their housings, a number of digital underwater photography manuals have appeared on the market, some better than others, but all claiming to turn you into the next Doubilet. A quick look at the cover tells you that this field guide is different. **La photo numérique sous-marine** is indeed written in Cousteau's language. The book also contains a CD with 10 images to play with and several utilities in either shareware or demo version, for PC mainly, but also for Mac.

Experienced photographers Isabelle & Amar Guillen have put together a complete guide that is small enough to fit in your hand luggage. Although the section devoted to underwater photography techniques only represents about half of the book's content, it is a mine of information with a good number of tips. I started reading *La photo numérique sous-marine* on my way back from work one evening and was so absorbed by it that I very nearly missed my train stop.

The chapters are neatly arranged following the lifecycle of a picture, with topics such as choosing your gear, travelling with your cherished

toy and even organising your hard disk and colour calibration. The book is concise but written in plain French and illustrated with images that you and I could achieve. No "Wow, I'll never be able to do that". The only confusing paragraph I found regarded a description of the Aperture Priority where "the camera works-out the aperture in order to obtain a correct exposure". This will surely be corrected in the next edition.

A strong emphasis is placed on equipment selection, general photography skills and post-processing. With the number of existing books and magazines about land digital photography and image manipulation, my first impression was that some of these topics could have been left behind in favour of a more underwater-related content. However, as the authors claim, this is a field guide that should contain enough information to let relatively inexperienced underwater photographers obtain results quickly. I liked the choice of the affordable Photoshop Elements for the manipulation examples, a trial version of which is available on the CD. Again, this book is designed with the amateur in mind and the authors probably can't imagine many

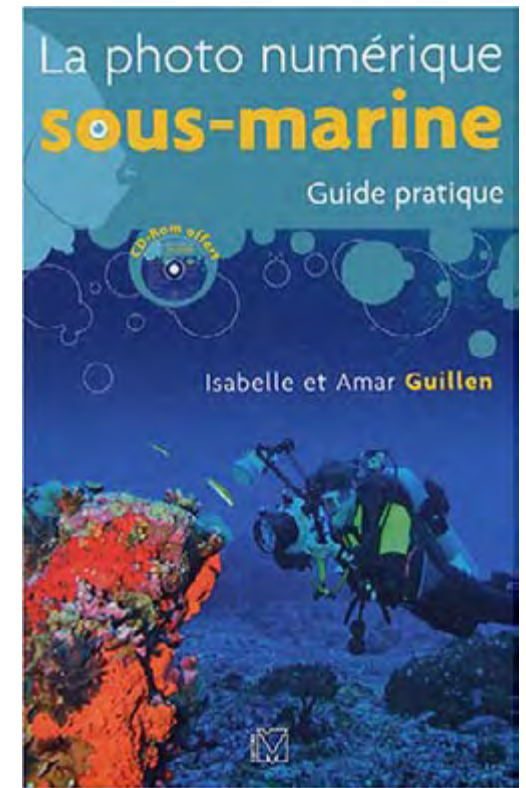
newcomers to photography choosing Photoshop CS2 - genuine copy, of course - as their first image editing software.

Where the authors may have let themselves down a little is with their choice of equipment. Nowadays, the lifespan of compact digital cameras is so short that some of the models described at length can only be found on the second-hand market. I can imagine myself flipping through the pages in a few years with a touch of nostalgia not unlike the emotions I feel when I see the old ZX Spectrum in my 1980s computer bible.

However, this certainly shouldn't deter French speakers from reading this guide. It is full of ideas and demonstrates that good results can be achieved, even if you haven't yet sold your spare kidney.

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Fortunately JP Trenque is French so to cater for our 54 French subscribers here is the same review but 'en Français'!



Avec l'explosion des ventes d'appareils numériques et de leurs caissons, un bon nombre de livres et de manuels en anglais sont apparus, certains desquels ayant la prétention de vous transformer en David Doubilet. Il suffit de jeter un coup d'oeil sur la couverture de **La photo numérique sous-marine** pour réaliser que cet ouvrage est différent. En effet, il s'agit d'un des premiers guides pratiques écrit dans la langue de Cousteau. Ce livre est accompagné d'un Cédérom contenant 10 images à retoucher ainsi que plusieurs logiciels gratuits pour PC principalement, mais

