

**The Jacques Cousteau Odyssey
The Complete Series on Triple DVD**
Running time 624 minutes
Delta Music Plc (www.deltamusic.co.uk)
Price £29.99

JACQUES COUSTEAU is a name synonymous with the invention of the aqualung and underwater adventure, and through him and his team, a huge television audience could participate in his discoveries. I myself have distant childhood memories of family gatherings around my parents' black and white TV, watching the Calypso team bringing this alien world into our home.

When asked to review this triple DVD for **SCOTTISH DIVER**, it was with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. I was looking forward to seeing the 12 programmes featured; but would they look old and outdated in a time when the Blue Planet had set our expectations of underwater filming to a new high?

I was not disappointed. To start with the programme listing was mouth watering; rather like a pick and mix of every aspect of underwater exploration. The series, filmed between 1977 and 1981, covers subjects such as underwater

archaeology, marine conservation and man's destructive influence on the environment, searching for lost civilisations and exploring both ancient and modern wrecks.

Calypso's Search for the *Britannic* was the first programme viewed, and I was astonished at the quality of underwater photography. As I watched more of the programmes, each was a pleasant surprise in both the quality and educational content.

Yes there are moments when you are briefly reminded that these programmes were made almost 30 years ago, such as the model of the island of Santorini, which collapses complete with indoor fireworks to demonstrate the volcanic eruption which is thought to have reshaped the island in ancient times, or the sight of photographs being painstakingly tacked onto a plywood board to produce photo mosaics.

What these programmes lack in computer graphics, are quickly overshadowed by Cousteau's sheer adventurous spirit and quest for knowledge. The filming of Cousteau and his divers descending into the hostile environment of an underwater volcano, or the efforts of saturation divers to recover drums of poisonous chemicals during a race against time salvage operation are just two such instance of this.

Although each of the 12 programmes deals with a different aspect of the marine environment, there is always the same underlying message of man's influence on his surroundings and the need for conservation. Cousteau was an ardent campaigner for the protection of our underwater environment and the messages these programmes promoted when they were first aired are still valid and meaningful today.

Cousteau has sometimes been criticised for never devoting himself entirely to one aspect of maritime study; he answered this by describing himself as an explorer, not a settler. "Every morning I wake up saying, I'm alive; a miracle. And so I keep on pushing".

I think the contents of this triple DVD are proof of that.

Alison Fuller-Shapcott

**Underwater to Get Out of the Rain:
A Love Affair with the Sea
(Trevor Norton)** ISBN 0099446588
Published by Arrow £6.39

THIS ENDEARING autobiography is an account of Trevor Norton on his travels from his early school days to becoming a professor of Marine Biology and author. His adventures take him from the coast around Whitley Bay, through his university travels to Devon, Wales and the Isle of Man.

Since he gained his degree his horizons have extended to such foreign climes as Lanzarote, Spain, Scotland, Ireland, Egypt, Sweden and the Americas; nice work if you can get it.

It's worth reading the book just for the description of his first tentative dives in the freezing North Sea, especially the account of his first dives with a ping pong-ed snorkel and his encounter with a careless cormorant.

His story is mostly amusing but tinged with sadness in parts as he tells us about the loss of colleagues and the effects people have on the

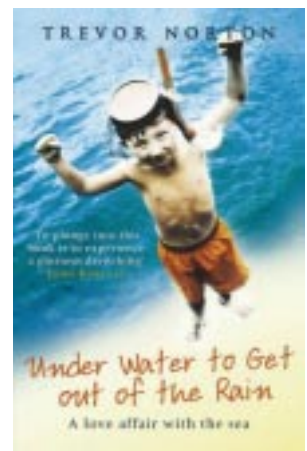
marine environment.

His quirky outlook on life includes the sex life of a barnacle, Adam and Eve, evolution, Pooh sticks in the Corryvreckan and the wrecks of the Sound of Mull.

An excellent book to relax with should the weather be no good for diving or after a long hard day at the office. Even if you are a non-diver you will enjoy this as a very informative and funny book.

If there is an afterlife, I do **NOT** want to come back as a barnacle.

Kev Watson



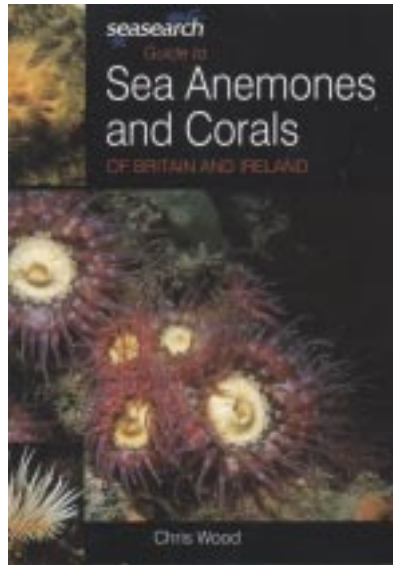
Seasearch Guide to Sea Anemones & Corals of Britain & Ireland
(Chris Wood, National Seasearch Co-ordinator) ISBN 0-948150-41-6
Published by the Marine Conservation Society - available at www.mcsuk.org £9.95

A DELIGHTFUL 128-page, A-5 size, guide to the anemones and corals found around our coasts, this book is lavishly illustrated with beautiful, glossy photographs throughout. It covers the majority of common and some unusual varieties of anemone, sea fan, sea pen, and hard and soft coral encountered in UK waters.

The guide starts with an explanation of where the subjects fit in the scientific naming hierarchy, the group anthazoa. Anthazoa have a common structure - the polyp - and the author takes us on a guided tour of its structure followed by a description of the animals feeding habits and methods of reproduction.

Illustrated with photographs and line drawings this section gives an insight into how anemones, in particular, are able to transform themselves from their familiar, attractive tentacled shape to a blob of jelly.

A summary table precedes individual species descriptions, providing a handy guide to the Latin name, common names, distribution around the coast, usual habitat and depth range, size and how common or rare the particular species is. Covering four pages, this section makes a very useful aid to



identification in combination with the species descriptions.

The individual monographs contain a text description of the species, its growing habit, method of reproduction and general distribution along with useful information specific to that particular animal. Photographs and, if appropriate, line drawings are used to illustrate the text.

The book was written with Seasearch volunteers in mind, but it will be useful to anyone interested in knowing more about the creatures they meet underwater. For a tenner it's a worthy addition to any divers' library.

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