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Get smart

If you shoot on location, you need kit that's rugged, dependable and preferably lighter than your regular studio gear. Michael Roscoe tests out five smart and affordable must-have accessories

Lastolite TriFlash lastolite.com

Lastolite's new TriFlash is a no-nonsense device allowing photographers to use the power of three flashguns. The bracket, which features three cold shoes for flashguns, can be fitted onto a standard sized spigot and secured to a light stand. It also incorporates an umbrella socket so that the light can be softened by firing the use of a translucent or a reflective umbrella. Suitable for use with any flashgun with a standard hot shoe mount, I tested it with a range of models, including a Canon Speedlite 580EX II, a Nissin Speedlite Di622 and a Nikon Speedlight SB-800. The TriFlash will certainly appeal to Nikon and Canon-model devotees who have multiple flash units with wireless triggering and control capabilities.

However, the Triflash should also appeal to the budget-minded flashgun user, using models such as the Nissin Speedlite Di622 and its built-in slave sync feature. Priced £39, it can be bought on its own or in kit form with an 80cm or 100cm umbrella and stand.

Seattle Solo DSLR bag www.daymen.co.uk

Shooting outdoors in the elements can present photographers with a number of challenges, but one fundamental concern should be keeping the tools of the trade safe and ready for action. Water and electrical items have never been good bedfellows so photographers could do worse than invest in a camera bag that will protect a DSLR from getting wet. There are a number of housing covers as well as camera armour that can help protect a DSLR but the latest bag on offer to safeguard a camera comes with a twist. The Seattle Solo DSLR bag is a shoulder bag that as the name suggests, is large enough to store a pro-sized camera with standard or short focal length lens. The exterior of the bag feels robust and well made. The front features a pouch to store spare batteries, memory cards or a lens cloth. Access to the main compartment is achieved via a Velcro sealed top flap that incorporates a small mesh pocket large enough for another CF card or two. The literal 'twist' comes in the form of an orange coloured dry-bag. You place your camera into it and

then roll or twist it three times and secure into place with two clips on either side. When sealed the dry-bag provides protection from dust, sand, dirt or water and although it isn't designed to be completely submerged, it does offer ample protection from even the dreariest British summer. It costs £60.

Lastolite V-H Bracket lastolite.com

The V-H Bracket is a sturdy device aimed at any photographer using a flashgun. It can support both DSLRs and medium format sized cameras, which are attached to a plate, slid onto its rail and locked into place. A flashgun can be mounted onto the cold shoe, which can also be removed so that a small flash head can be attached to its standard-sized spigot. I used it with a Nikon D3x and SB-800 and it felt well balanced, secure and comfortable to carry thanks to its moulded grip. I also discovered that it could easily handle larger flash lighting such as Elinchrom's new Quadra flash head and battery pack and I even managed to use a 66x66cm softbox. This is due in part to the

V-H Bracket's extendable arm that has a range from up to 30cm to help alter the angle and direction of the flash light and enable photographers to use light-shapers without them getting in the way. The primary selling point of this bracket is indicated in its V-H name that represents its Vertical and Horizontal capabilities. The rail attached to the camera smoothly rotates through 90-degrees to ensure the flash stays in the same place while enabling photographers to shoot in landscape and portrait format.

Overall, this is a very useful device that does more than simply help photographers avoid red-eye and unsightly shadows associated with using a hotshoe mounted flash. A flashgun can be raised and lowered and rotated through 360° to bounce light and open up even more illumination possibilities. It costs £60.

Induro C414 calumetphoto.co.uk

The Induro C414 is one of the largest models from the Company's selection of 10 Carbon 8X Tripod range. It comes in a high quality shoulder bag and folds down to 64.3

cm and weighs in at just 2.8kg, making it eminently portable for a piece of kit that can support up to a whopping 12kg load. This means it is capable of taking the largest professional DSLRs and longest lenses such as the Nikon D3x and a 600mm lens, as well as larger medium and large format cameras. It has rubber grip leg locks that are easy to rotate and lock the legs into position up to a maximum height of around 1.7m. The angle of the legs can be adjusted individually to either 80°, 55° or 24° to attain a lower position about 20cm off the ground with the centre column removed.

The C414 also offers extra grip and stability by swapping the rubber feet for stainless steel spikes and by using the spring loaded weight hook. There is also an integrated bubble level, a compass to help photographers get their bearings and a foam grip for comfortable handling.

The overriding impression of the C414 is its attention to detail, ensuring precise and fuss free operation, with subtle features such as a grooved centre column and non-rotating leg sections to eliminate unwanted movement. It also has a reversible tripod head mounting

screw, so almost any tripod head can be attached and the centre column can be reversed to attain even lower shooting angles.

There's no doubt that the Induro C414 is a high quality tripod that offers the support professional photographers with expensive cameras and lenses demand. It is light and portable enough to carry to remote locations but it also offers the solid performance that means it wouldn't look out of place in a studio environment.

HP StorageWorks RDX www.hp.com/uk

The StorageWorks RDX Removable Disk is an intriguing backup system from Hewlett-Packard. At first glance it appears to be nothing more than a solid looking hard drive that connects to a computer via a USB 2.0 connection. Being an HP product, it is only Windows compatible, but this mains-powered device is quick to install and set-up. The unique selling point of this system is its removable disk cartridges in 160GB, 320GB or 500GB sizes, but it is worth bearing in mind that half a Terabyte can

cost around £439 +VAT. They fit into the RDX unit and remind me of a chunkier version of the old Zip drives used on a Mac. It can be removed from the drive by pressing the main green illuminated button on the front of the unit or from a computer. There is a several second delay for it to be ejected but you'll know when its happening as it makes a strange sound – similar to changing gear in a car without using the clutch.

Photographers using this as a backup solution can simply drag and drop images into the drive but they also bundle some 'hands-free' HP RDX Continuous Data Protection Software to protect your entire system.

HP claims that these disks are long lasting and the docking stations are forward and backward compatible so there shouldn't be a need for expensive upgrades in the future when higher capacity cartridges become available. Performance is swift with speeds of up to 108GB/hr but one of the main benefits of this system is that these cartridges are built to last, so that your image files are safe for the future and they are small enough to take away and store off site. **BJP**