

EDITOR'S LETTER



Get Me That Gizmo

Photographers are gadget hounds, no question about it. From basic clamps to high-precision tripod heads, cable releases to robotic camera mounts, we'll find a reason to need it, even if just for one type of shot. Screen protectors, viewfinder hoods, filter holders (you can never have too many filters), dust blowers—no wonder our camera bags are bulging. Which means it's time to get a new bag...

That's one reason that the editors of Popular Photography included so many accessories in our fifth annual POP Awards for Photography's Outstanding Products (page 65)—more than a dozen of them, if you include everything that's not a camera, lens, or software.

And there were plenty of handy items we discovered this year that didn't win POP Awards. Take, for example, the Flipbac, a hinged mirror that attaches to the back of a camera to allow off-angle viewing of a fixed LCD screen, then flips up to protect it. Another example: Cocoon's Grid-It system, a panel made of woven elastic straps to hold smaller accessories snug and organized—you can see at a glance all the stuff that used to just float loose in your bag.

Many of the gadgets we see represent variations on other gadgets, invented by both pro and amateur photographers who weren't satisfied with the gear they had. Todd Wallis, an avid hunter from Ogden, UT, sent me a camera strap that he's now producing commercially: The Wallis Tactical Sling lets you hang your DSLR snugly across your body and then swing it rapidly to eye level when you shoot. BlackRapid and Sun-Sniper make similar straps—each one is designed slightly differently and offers distinct benefits. The Wallis sling has a spring-loaded metal clamp that lets you adjust the length of the strap itself very quickly and easily.

Some entrepreneurial photographers have built sizeable businesses creating and marketing their innovative gadgets. Witness Gary Fong, whose lighting modifiers for hot-shoe flash have scored big among his fellow wedding and event photographers. Or Craig Strong, the inventor of the Lensbaby, whose frustration with the creative limitations of conventional SLR lenses has led to an entirely new optical category and even, I'd argue, contributed to an aesthetic shift in photography.

Now don't forget to pack the gaffer's tape.

Miriam Leuchter



NEWSSTAND Olympus returns to DSLRs with the fast and rugged E-5, photographed by Tony Cordoza. Read our full test report on **page 83**.

SUBSCRIBER For an incredible diversity of birds, wildlife, and landscapes, head to Costa Rica. Photographer Tim Fitzharris shares his tips on **page 76**.



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