

CHEAP SHOTS

Pro outdoor photographers share a few of their on-the-spot fixes and cheap-as-chips workarounds



Chris McLennan

McLennan recalls the time he had to think quickly to save a commercial shoot: “I was on an assignment for a large property development and there was a high-end agency involved. They had a full storyboard of proposed images that they wanted me to shoot. One was of a smiling female surfer out on the crystal-clear waters waiting to catch a wave. Unfortunately, the night before we had had torrential rain and the water was a chocolate-brown colour. I had an idea . . . it was either going to work or I was going to look rather foolish. I put Holly – the surfer – in a horizon pool and I got in also and partly submerged my camera. I had a couple of strong young men use surfboards to push water and create waves in the pool. My assistant used a reflector to bounce light onto her face and with some careful timing I had the shot and everyone was thrilled!”

Mark Watson

Watson has a tip for getting long exposure images and star trails if you don't have a cable release to hand: “Grab a peanut from your trail mix or a small stone and a bit of gaffer tape or an elastic band or bungy-cord. Then set the camera to ‘bulb’ and depress the trigger using the peanut/stone and tape/elastic band so the shutter remains open. Remove the lens cap to expose and when you are done, finally replace the lens cap or very carefully release the peanut to end the exposure.”



Alex Treadway

When working from his part-time base in Kathmandu, Treadway often wants to shoot while on/in the river: “There are full underwater housings on the market which cater for divers but these are big, heavy pieces of kit which would be dangerous on a rafting trip. One big wave and the whole thing could go crashing into someone's face. For simple splash-proof stuff I've made good use of shower caps I've found in hotel rooms. They work great as a makeshift rain cover. For more demanding wet stuff like rafting and canyoning, there's some great PVC covers on the market which are fully waterproof and far cheaper than a full dive housing. A company called Ewa-Marine make the best ones. And because they're essentially a bag with air inside, they're much safer on a rafting trip.”

He also has a general tip concerning lens care: “To clean your lenses don't use a cloth or anything where you might rub a piece of sharp dust into the glass and scratch the lens. Use cotton buds and carefully work them in a circular motion: your lenses will be spotless. Johnson & Johnson are the best because the cotton is much thicker. They're great for cleaning inside the diopter too. My filmmaker flatmate taught me this one and I've sworn by it ever since.”



Robbie Shone

Caving photographer Shone says: “I have had to bodge my gear many, many times underground. I once used kitchen cling-film to wrap around my camera because the cave was so muddy and dirty.”