DIGITAL PHOTO STORAGE

for the Traveling Photographer.

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Back in the early days of digital photography, there was only one way a traveler could bring his photos home. He took a lap-top computer with him. These days, however, there are a number of more economical and more convenient alternatives.

Users of point and shoot models, which capture compressed .jpg files can simply buy a number of memory cards, for a reasonable sized card will hold a hundreds of photos. Such cameras don't require hi-speed cards and so several can be purchased at a cost that is, it seems, dropping every day!

For those who's cameras produce larger, raw files (such as the 10.3mb files from the new M8, or the 19.6 mb files from the Digital Modul-R), simply buying cards is not a cost effective option. A 2GB (two gigabyte) card holds just 100 shots from my DM-R, and as I often shoot 2,500 to 3000 photos during a short holiday, the cost of high speed cards would easily exceed the cost of a very nice lap-top!

If you are like me and do not wish to carry the weight or devote that much luggage space to a lap-top, there are neat little hard-drive based devices generally known as the *Photo Bank, Photo Vault* or *Digital Wallet*. They're also called *multi-media storage* or, simply, *memory card backup* devices.

There are also portable units by Apacer (and, perhaps others), which burn your photos onto a CD. Leica used one of these to burn our M8 images onto CD's for us at the recent Leica Akademie, in Wetzlar. Some folks prefer these units over the

hard-drive based Photo Banks, as you can make two copies, mail one home and carry the other with you, for greater security. Still, you have to carry a stack of blank CD's with you, so I prefer the smaller, lighter Photo Banks. Let's look at three of them.

These little machines vary, in size, between one and two packs of cigarettes. Essentially, they are, portable; battery or AC operated units employing a small hard drive with a dedicated controller. They have a built in card reader although the number of card types varies by machine. Each one I've used came with a 100V~240V 50/60 Hz power supply, so it will work anywhere in the world, with only a simple plug adapter; should your battery be flat. Those from specific camera makers will often only work with their proprietary formats, and, of course, jpegs. Most, however, will save files in just about format.

The slickest, largest and most expensive units come from Epson. I purchased their P-2000 *(on the left, in the photo above)* when I bought my LeiCanon 20D (see: The Viewfinder, Vol. 38, #3).

The P-2000 featured a 40 GB hard drive and an unbelievably good 3.8 inch (diagonal) screen! *(Later, came the P-4000 with a larger, 80mb drive. Both have now been superceded by the P3000 & P5000 models which feature a slightly larger screen and a tiny speaker.)* These units understand the raw files from Nikon and Canon cameras, as well as the Epson RD-1, displaying the .jpg files that are tucked

into the headers of those files. Very handy for chimping and editing away your less desirable shots.

Eventually, I sold mine, for although it worked perfectly, Epson does not support the .dng format, used by Leica and now adopted by Samsung, Pentax and others. It would copy and transfer them to my home computer flawlessly, but I could not use the screen. While the 40mb hard drive was good some 4,500 shots with the Canon 20D, but would hold fewer than 2000 shots from the DMR.

Whilst planning a month long trip to Europe for Photokina and the recent LHSA convention in Wetzlar/Solms, I decided that the new, smaller, Hyperdrive HD-80 *(right hand unit, lead photo)* would be the right choice in a portable storage unit. Though it has no display, it's very fast, copying a full 2GB card in just over 5 and a half minutes while doing a full, 32 bit, copy verification in firmware. Besides, it would copy 80GB of photos on a single set of Lithium AA batteries, so I wouldn't have the weight/space of a charger

Pop the cover at one end, and in go your 4 x AA batteries – regular or rechargeable. Pop the cover at the other end, and you'll find the CF and SD slots, as well as the on/off switch and USB connector.

When I first got it, operation was erratic, but after a few tries it settled down and ran as advertised. However, when we got to Paris, the very first time I went to use it, it failed, with a faint odor of burned component wafting from its case!

With the help of Xavier Bille, my co-owner of the Leica Reflex Forum and our host, we tracked down a generic "Photo Bank" *(center unit in the lead photo.)* in a small Chinese run shop in the backwaters of Paris. The unit (called a Cenda C201 on the unit and a PB003 on their website) is the smallest of the three, and accepts CF cards and Micro-Drives in one slot; SD, MMC and Memory stick pro cards in another; and Mini-SD cards in a third. It came, without drive, for a mere €49 (about US$65) and readily accepted the still working drive from the failed Hyperdrive.

Operation is dead simple… there are only two buttons… *On/Off* and *Copy.* Turn it on with the USB line connected to your computer and it becomes an external hard drive. *(It is limited to partitions of 32GB, so it may, in fact, become several external drives. However, when properly*

partitioned, the Cenda's firmware fills one logical drive, then the next, transparently and seamlessly.)

Turn it on with a card in one of the slots &, it reports the amount of space used on the card and the remaining space on the drive. Press the other key, and it starts copying. When it's finished, it turns itself off, within seconds.

Of course, if you turn it on with the USB line connected *and* a card in one of the slots, it becomes a card reader!

I understand the Hyperdrive is just as easy to use, but I never did find out. It's not yet back from repair. Interestingly, when checking the web, I discovered that the Hyperdrive HD-80 is no more, replaced by a new unit called the Hyperdrive SPACE, which looks suspiciously like an updated Cenda!

The Cenda is very slow, taking just over 25 minutes to copy a full 2 GB card, and I have no idea if it does any verification, or not. The routine was simple. After a day's shooting, put a card into the unit and go for dinner. Come back, put the next card in and go for a drink. Put the last card in, press record and head for bed! As with the other brands, the fastest way to clear the cards is to format them in your camera, and you'll I be ready to roll, once again!

Despite its slow speed, the Cenda is my unit of choice! It's small, inexpensive and proved itself to be absolutely reliable. It's hard to find but similar units can be found on the various auction sites.